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ELEANOR LEE

A NOVEL

BY

MARGARET E. SANGSTER



1938-



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*This book is inscribed
with love
to*

CLARA de FOREST BURRELL

FOREWORD

AS we walk the world's highway we meet and pass many whom we would love if we knew them, but whose paths diverge from ours. Every life has its message of helpfulness for every other, if there were time to stop and become acquainted. Few lives are without their hidden sorrows, and no joy is ever complete that has not been somewhere touched by pain.

In writing the story of Eleanor Lee, I have shown a woman true in the stress of trying circumstances to an old-fashioned ideal, a woman whom adversity did not embitter, and whose fidelity did not waver under any temptation. When womanhood is at once sweet and steadfast, it attains a high nobility, and this I have tried to illustrate in the every-day life of an every-day heroine.

MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

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Eleanor Lee

I

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

THE sunshine of an October day lay soft upon the little village, and the air had the crisp edge that comes with red and yellow leaves. Hills and dales were veiled in the opaline haze of autumn. Eleanor Lee had been dusting the books in the library, a long and tedious piece of work, but it had to be done and she did not mind. She would have finished the task much sooner if she had not so often yielded to the temptation to peep into favorite volumes, and read page after page, now from a forgotten book on the top shelf, again from an old medical work, or perhaps from one of her father's law reports. Judge Lee's library was delightful but miscellaneous, rich in standard authors, thinly provided with current literature, though there were in it some volumes of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Thackeray and Dickens. Eleanor was a born reader, and everything in print attracted her, from the advertisements in the newspapers to the brown and dingy sermons which were a family legacy from her grandfather, the Rev. Mather Jenks, who had minis-

tered to one parish forty years. It was her privilege to take care of the library, and its semi-annual dusting always took place when her father was absent on circuit duty. Naturally, he could not be interrupted when at home. Mrs. Lee, whose housekeeping was of the comfortable variety that does not insist on too much cleaning, had an impression that Eleanor was over-fastidious, an inheritance from generations of scrupulously neat housewives in the past. But, probably if Eleanor had been less careful, her mother would have been more so. On this day, she had been more than usually thorough, and she surveyed the shining shelves and the beautiful and stately room with peculiar satisfaction as she finished. Mother would be pleased when she came from town, and father, on his return, delighted. He would call her his darling little girl, in that tone which was as sweet in her ears as a caress.

Eleanor went to the garden and cut late roses and chrysanthemums with great bunches of fragrant lemon verbena, and filled the vases in the drawing-room and library. She gathered an immense handful of cosmos, and put it in a silver pitcher in the hall. A little lingering honeysuckle made a bouquet for her father's desk. Kathleen, her sister, passing through the house with her school-books, exclaimed at the beauty of the flowers, from the top of the stairs, "Hurry and get dressed, Eleanor. Father is coming home to-night, and you've made the house look fit for a wedding. He'll be charmed!"

"I know it," she answered, flying up two steps at a time, catching Kathleen around the waist, and whirling with her giddily to the door of their cham-

ber, where both girls sank, laughing and panting, on a broad divan. It was almost four o'clock. The canary in its cage was singing like mad, and Eleanor listened with an answering joy. She was very happy with the pure untroubled ecstasy that belongs to girlhood when one is well and strong and glad to be alive, and no angel of unrest has yet stirred the waters of the heart.

Presently she dressed herself for the afternoon. Tall, slender, graceful, her figure not yet rounded, for she was just past eighteen, with dark, dreamy eyes, and a mass of wavy brown hair that made a crown for her head, and was her torment because there was too much of it for the Greek knot she adored, the girl merited the pet name of Princess, which was her father's favorite appellation for his elder daughter. She slipped on a gown of clinging white wool, with a girdle of yellow silk, and without a glance at its effect, for she had no vanity, passed down to the library again to read and rest and watch for her mother's return.

The clock in the hall, an old, old clock that had come from across the sea, and ticked away the years of six generations of the Lees, struck four. Above stairs the canary sang his very heart away, and Kathleen at the second-best piano was drumming over her exercises. Otherwise, house, and garden, and street, were very still, so still that Eleanor heard the steadily approaching footsteps of a man who must have arrived by the four o'clock train. Few men came in by that. Islington was a deserted village so far as masculine humanity was in concern, until the six o'clock express brought husbands and fathers

back from business every night. During the day it was a New England Cranford.

She raised her eyes, and saw a stranger coming up the avenue between the yellowing maples straight to the door. Eleanor observed that he walked with intention and swiftly as one who brought tidings. Yet he stayed his foot at the porch, as one who hesitated to tell his errand. A client of her father's, perhaps, or a gentleman who had met the Judge abroad, where he had been last summer. The man advanced and rang the bell.

"Is Mrs. Lee at home?" she heard him ask, in a low voice, and the maid answered with the hospitable manner of the gracious household.

"No, sir, she's in town, but Miss Eleanor's in the library. Please walk in."

Eleanor was accustomed to receive people who called on her parents. She had often played the hostess when her mother was ill or absent, and she had no timidity, yet something chilled her as she met the stranger's grave, set face, and saw the pallor of his compressed lips. She motioned him to a seat, but he remained standing until she resumed her chair. He had the effect of wishing to speak, but not knowing how to begin. A bearer of unwelcome news, he paused on the threshold, gazing at the radiant vision before him, feeling deep compunction that he must presently dim it with tears.

Is bad news ever broken gently? Is it ever worth while even to attempt to soften the force of a blow that must crush joy as a rough hand crushes a butterfly? One might as well accept the inevitable. If misfortune arrive, it must be met with what courage

one can summon. Calamity is never other than devastation. A shock is like a whirlwind or a cyclone; it blots the world, and for a time drives the planets from their orbits. We stand bewildered among the ruins of the accustomed and the pleasant. To most gladness in this earth of ours there come pauses when we forget that we were ever happy. And no amount of preparation can change the order of nature, or make the rough places plain, or soothe at once the ache of that ploughshare of suffering, that as Lowell tersely says, tears its way down to our primitive rock.

"Mrs. Lee is not at home?" said the man, tentatively, longing to gain time. It was not easy to dash the light from the face of this girl in white. The man had a little child of his own at home, dark-eyed and sweet. She might grow up as fair as this bonny maiden.

"Mother is in town," answered Eleanor. "I am expecting her very soon. If you wish to see her, I hope you can wait. It is pleasant in this sunny corner, and here are the magazines." She rose.

"Pray remain seated. You are Judge Lee's elder daughter, I presume. I have heard your father speak of you."

Eleanor smiled. Her father was noted for speaking of his children in the world beyond the cottage doors. Yet she thought it singular that the man did not state his errand, and she drew herself up with a little air of dignity, waiting to hear what it might be.

"Your father has been some days away, I believe?"

"Yes," Eleanor acquiesced, aware of something to come.

"I hardly know how to tell you, Miss Lee, but it must be told. Your father was taken ill this morning at Aldis, whence I have come, fifty miles from here. He was at the inn on his way home. He has been very ill indeed."

Eleanor rose again from her chair, clasping her hands piteously, alarmed at once.

"Oh, why are you so slow, why did not some one telegraph? I am wasting time," she exclaimed. "I must go to my father."

"Calm yourself, Miss Lee, I beg," said the stranger. "Your father is coming to you. The fact is," he halted and went on, "that Judge Lee passed away without a struggle at Aldis to-day: he is at rest. I brought the word to the office, and then I came to tell you, and to see if I could be of service. No one else would come." He paused and added, "The body will be with you this evening."

Eleanor sat as if frozen, hardly comprehending, pallid, in a dazed silence. Presently, the visitor, satisfied that he could do nothing more, turned to go. At the outer door he stopped and rang the bell. When the maid answered it he said, "You would better see to Miss Lee. I am afraid she will faint." Then he left, taking the vision of her stricken figure with him. He had done a hard day's work.

Norah found Eleanor sitting as if turned to stone. She roused herself a half hour later when her mother came rustling in, full of her happy day, her light laugh making its musical sound as she swept into the flower-dressed room.

"Why, Eleanor, my darling, what has come to you? You are not ill, surely? Why Eleanor!"

"Oh, mother! mother!" cried the girl, throwing herself into her mother's arms. "Father is dead. They are bringing him home. Father died at Aldis this morning!"

It was a bolt from the blue. The next few days were graven on Eleanor's memory as by the point of a diamond. She never forgot them. And to the end of her life, she loathed a certain poetic phrase repeated three days later by a man who stood beside her father's coffin, and tried in clumsy fashion to be a comforter. He was a pompous, blundering fellow, with red hair, large hands, and a good heart.

"Eleanor, you'll get over this after a while. You think you won't, but everybody does. Time blunts the feeling. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. God, you know, Eleanor."

"Oh, Donald, don't," she exclaimed, but he enjoyed the flow of his own eloquence, and floundered on. She stood on the opposite side of the coffin, rebellious against consolation at all, most of all from this source. Her heart was beating like a captive in a cage. She despised words that sounded in her ears both perfunctory and oratorical. But she controlled her expression, and made no further sign of impatience. What good would it do? The monotonous, rather rasping voice prosed on. Behind that rigidly restrained look of hers, different emotions were in conflict, chief among them, notwithstanding her rebellion, a feeling of amusement. How her father would have appreciated the situation, with his keen sense of humor and his love of fun. Judge Lee had been a man of infinite tenderness, and of infinite drollery, and his daughter knew just how he would

have kindly tolerated the platitudes of Donald Waugh. At last Mr. Waugh tore himself away, first holding her limp, unresponsive hand in a close clasp, the lingering pressure of which she endured just as she had endured the personal attentions he had been offering her for a twelvemonth. "Eleanor's tame bear," the Judge had called him, sympathizing with her when the poor fellow stepped on and tore her first beloved trained dress, and sympathizing with him when the little lady scorned him day by day. But Donald came of sturdy Scotch-Irish stock and was not easily daunted. Eleanor's indifference stimulated his ardor, and he had too good an opinion of himself to realize that hers was unflattering.

Donald was not the only visitor in these days of darkness. Friends came and went all day long during the interval between the Judge's death and the funeral. Eleanor received every one, took charge of the house and the kindred, made herself a guard for her mother, and put her grief resolutely in the background. She hardly shed a tear, but her whole being ached in the revolt of her suffering. Kathleen would huddle, a heap of misery, in the corner of the sofa, and cry till her eyes were red and she had no more tears left. Mrs. Lee remained in her own room, leaving it only to shut the door now and then, and turn the key of the drawing-room, and stand beside the dead. She was passive and silent, asserting herself only when her brother and the minister urged her not to go to the grave.

"Dear Mrs. Lee," said the pastor, "you will only be utterly wearied. Be persuaded and stay here after the service."

"Sister, I wish you would," added her brother gently and pleadingly.

She smiled a wan smile. "And let you all take John up there on the hill without me. No, the girls and I will go. He would have gone with us," she said firmly. "It is the last thing I can ever do for John."

When they returned from the cemetery Mrs. Lee was calm and brave. After a day or two, the guests one by one melted away, and soon the succession of friends and acquaintances who brought their condolence, ceased to call. Judge Lee was no more; and in the court room and community, another reigned in his stead. The widow and the two girls took up their lonely life in the house that so missed the presence of the bluff, courtly, genial man, the home that was lost without his ringing voice, his cordial cheer, his bonhomie, his constant affection. Hard work it was to grow used to the gap, but it had to be done. Mrs. Lee refused to make the house sombre. As winter drew on, the blinds were never lowered, and Kathleen's piano was heard as usual. Sometimes Eleanor threw a cloth over the canary's cage, but her mother said, "Try to bear it, dearest. Your father loved song and sunshine. He would not like us to mope and mourn. He said to me years ago, 'Whichever of us may go first, the one who remains must not show the white feather.' And darling, he's just as much alive as ever, only out of our sight, you know. So let the bird sing."

But Eleanor knew that her mother wept in the night. Poor Mrs. Lee grew thin that winter, and looked older, and would not crimp her hair, or

suffer any relief to the blackness of her widow's dress.

Eleanor had not liked mourning, and had said in the old days before death marched over the doorsill and routed her theories that she would never wear it. But her mother was decided on this point, and settled the matter without controversy.

"What! not wear black for your father, my dear! Say no more about it. We must wear it, to show our respect, and for our protection. You and Kathleen for a year or two; I, forever. I shall never change back to colors."

And she never did. Through a long life of widowhood she wore only black.

All this story happened a good many years ago, and Eleanor and Kathleen were young girls in the years that preceded the Civil War. They lived through the stir and stress and tumult of that eventful period which made the land red with the blood of the slain, and was fervid with the tense passion of brothers in battle array. That time was not yet. Faint rumblings of the coming storm were heard, but few noticed them, and there were bliss and bane, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, just as if nothing beyond the commonplace were likely to occur. Eleanor observed an unusual exaltation about her mother, one morning nearly a year after the Judge's death. She hovered near her, solicitous, yet did not intrude on her mood by questions. Quietly she brought her sewing and sat near Mrs. Lee; pushed a hassock under her feet, and a cushion against her back. Kathleen, in the drawing-room, was playing softly. The others were

in the library. A large photograph of the Judge was on an easel opposite Mrs. Lee's favorite chair. Fresh flowers were always kept before it, as if it were a shrine.

"Eleanor," said the mother, "I am leading the most curious double life: do you know that I dream of your father nearly every night, and sometimes I see him when I am wide awake?"

"Oh, mother!"

"Yes, indeed, and it is the greatest delight. I used to wet my pillow every night before I slept, with tears that would not stop, but not now. For John has told me not to."

Eleanor began to fear that her mother was growing insane. But she had grace given her to keep silent and listen. All her life she was to be a good listener, and people would love her for it in the years to come.

"I was sitting in my own room yesterday, very, very sad, when suddenly I felt myself not alone. I looked up, and there was John, in that old blue coat he used to wear on our tramps in the woods. He looked as he did the year you were born: you never saw him when he was so young and handsome, but I have always kept that memory of him in my heart. Well, he sat down by me, and looked right into my eyes, and said, 'Alice, sweetheart!'"

"Yes, I can hear him," said Eleanor.

"Alice, you have grieved enough. You are coming to me when you are not needed here—but the house is too sad. You are too sad. You must have it as you used to. You and I are not far apart. You have Eleanor and Kathleen—you three are together.

I am waiting for you. Be strong and of good courage.' Then he was gone, but where he had been sitting a shaft of evening light lay golden on the chair."

No doubt this experience was a beautiful dream. Eleanor thought so, but she was thankful that her mother grew happier.

As they were talking, a tap came at the door, and with the privileged freedom of a family friend, Donald Waugh walked in.

"I came to inquire if I might escort Eleanor to the concert to-morrow night," he asked.

Eleanor frowned and shook her head. She hated to be monopolized by Mr. Waugh, and yet she was unable to shake him off. Before she could speak, her mother answered for her.

"You are very good, indeed, Donald. Kathleen and I will go too. I will procure the tickets. You may escort the family."

This was not according to Mr. Waugh's programme. In those days, chaperones were almost unheard of, and a man took the girl he admired all by herself to evening entertainments, and sometimes to a little supper afterwards. Eleanor, however, had never yet gone out alone with any man except her father. It was a relief to her that the old order was not to be changed. Donald, with what politeness he could muster, marched heavily off.

"Thank you, mother, for not asking him to supper," said Eleanor. "He is horrid."

"Child," said her mother, "don't call him horrid. The man is in love with you."

II

THE SUIT OF DONALD WAUGH

TO-MORROW night came and Donald Waugh presented himself in good season, on the stroke of eight, with a carriage. He was in evening dress and had a white carnation in his button-hole.

Mrs. Lee exclaimed at the carriage. The evening was fine, the distance short, and people in that neighborhood took carriages only when it rained. It seemed absurd to drive just around a corner or two.

"This is extravagance, Donald. We are in the habit of walking; it looks foolish, doesn't it?" she remonstrated.

"Oh, for once, let us be luxurious," he said. "I'm glad you are going, Mrs. Lee. You have been staying so much at home this while past."

"Yes, indeed, but now I shall try to go everywhere with the children," she answered. "Isn't Eleanor coming, Kathleen? I thought she was ready."

"In a minute, mother," called Eleanor and presently she descended the wide staircase, a straight slender girl, in a gown of some thin stuff that trailed behind her. A big feather fan was in her hand. She had delayed a moment to discard the bunch of white carnations she had thrust into her belt and restore them to a glass of water on her bureau. Having caught a glimpse of Mr. Waugh's flower she did not

wish to match it. Kathleen softly clapped her hands, as she watched Eleanor coming down with the air of a princess in a procession, though she was all alone.

Eleanor needed no color to set off her black gown beyond the rich rose red in her cheeks. She was beautiful in the rare loveliness of her years, with a promise of greater beauty when she should be older. Her mother regarded her with complacency. Women take very great satisfaction in the beauty of women; it is a pleasure partially artistic, and to some extent partisan, as if the comeliness of the individual belonged to the entire sex. A mother, too, sees in her fair young daughter, the revival of her own youth. A mother's pride in a fair daughter is inevitable.

Donald beamed as he followed the ladies to reserved seats in the Assembly Room of Islington where concerts and lectures were given. All the dwellers in the little borough were there, and every one was glad to see Mrs. Lee and the girls emerging from their seclusion. The young man with them was aggressive by nature and something of a mastiff's resolution was shown in the set of his strong jaw. He was clean-shaven which was not the fashion then, and he had a heavily moulded, ugly, but honest and intelligent face, with a shock of red hair. Eleanor would have thought him the homeliest man of her acquaintance, if she had not been so accustomed to seeing him for years, that he made no more impression on her than his collie, Laird, or the furniture in the office. Though a business man, he had taken a course of law with her father, and his comings and goings had been as those of a member of

the family. Lately Donald had bored her, and she declared to Kathleen that he was a prig and perfectly insufferable. Poor Donald. He had not the ghost of an idea why it was that Eleanor whom he thought so perfect had thus far taken pains to repel him, and been as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. It had piqued his vanity and increased his ardor. He had now arrived at the time when he intended to make an end of indecision.

That very morning, the maiden sister who kept house for him, in the old mansion where both had grown up, had ventured to inquire why he had purchased a building site in a part of the village, some miles away. She had noticed that he was often poring over the plans of architects and that he took a new interest in furniture and draperies, and pottered about asking questions about interiors. Miss Rachel recognized the symptoms as indicative of an intention to break away from the bachelor estate, and she was sorry. She preferred to keep Donald to herself, as only sisters often do with brothers.

In reply to the question which was casually put as she passed his cup and saucer, her brother answered, "Islington is bound to grow, Rachel, and one of these days it will have a park and a boulevard, and a graded avenue straight to the ocean. I bought that land partly as an investment, but really with a view to building a home. When I marry, I shall want a new home for my wife. This house must always belong to you. I know what associations it has for us, but my wife might think it old-fashioned."

"You speak of your wife as if you had already selected the lady. Who is she?" For the life of

her, Rachel could not help shutting her lips tightly and looking with a certain disapproval at her brother. He took no notice. An elation, rising like the sun in the morning, spread from his strong chin to his broad brow; he looked as if he already grasped good fortune.

"Eleanor Lee is the lady, but I haven't asked her yet. That is a mere form to be gone through however."

"Oh, Donald, Donald, why not the moon? Eleanor thinks you are middle-aged."

"I am barely thirty," he said with much offense in his tone.

"That is old in the eyes of nineteen. I know her age. I remember when she was born. Why, my dear, Eleanor Lee is not much more than a school-girl. She is really not yet in society."

"Her father's death postponed her coming out, but that doesn't count. I would rather have a wife younger than myself, one whom I may mould and impress with my own opinions. Now, Rachel, don't set yourself against me. I thought you were so fond of the Lees."

"I am, and especially of Eleanor, but Donald, she will make you miserable if you marry her, though I don't think you will gain her consent. No two people were ever more unsuited by training and temperament than you and she. Don't I know? Why Eleanor has been in my Bible class for the last six years. Why don't you court Mattie Dunmore?"

"I don't flatter myself that Mattie would have me, and I am certain that I don't want Mattie. Princess Eleanor is the wife I want. I've meant to win her

ever since she was a child in short frocks. She's most unusual in the quality of her mind."

Rachel sighed. She said no more. From long experience she knew the futility of argument with Donald. When he had made up his mind, he wouldn't change. It was could not rather than would not, and he was never influenced by suggestions from the other side, or open to advice. The men of her family were like that, indomitable, loyal, straightforward, clean, but narrow, prejudiced and contrary, not easy to live with, though fancying themselves so. Their ideal was the submissive woman, the woman who yields. Rachel knew that Eleanor Lee would not mature into that sort of woman.

Donald was disturbed. He divined Rachel's attitude and understood that it was as fixed as his own. The Waughs were alike. She was both sister and mother to the man, for their mother had died when he was an infant. He preferred her to be pleased. What he did not guage, for he had no plummet to fathom it, was the depth of his incapacity to see any side of a proposition except the one that for him embodied the personal equation.

"You might wish me luck, Rachel," he said, rising from the table.

"I do, Donald, and with all my heart," she answered, but as she left the room, she added to herself, "It will do you no good." Nor was she very sorry. In her view a passing pang, though acute, was less to be dreaded than the lifelong wretchedness of incompatibility.

Miss Rachel went to inspect her kitchen and refrigerator and talk with her cook. Donald proceeded

to his woollen mills. He was the owner of a large business and had many interests. Outside Islington he was spoken of as a man likely to rise.

"I'll have the oversight of Donald for some time yet," said Miss Rachel to herself that afternoon, as she went to his room and laid out the dress-suit, the shirt with the gold studs, and the rest of his evening toilette. When he sallied forth resplendent the plain little old maid sister in the background had contributed her share to his glory. He took her continual attention to his comfort as he took the atmosphere: he had never done without it, and it did not occur to him to be in the least thankful.

Donald went home with the Lees after the concert, and they had a little feast of hot oysters and coffee in the dining-room. Then Kathleen went to bed and before long her mother followed her. Donald gave no sign of immediate departure, and Eleanor who was at the piano, playing in a reminiscent style, some of the tunes of the evening, made a little gesture of appeal as her mother passed her. But Mrs. Lee was too weary to sit up longer. This first plunge into anything more social than the prayer-meeting had been something of a trial.

Donald stood in front of the mantelpiece, gazing around the cozy library, the shelves so lined with books, the busts, the pictures, the desk, the soft cushiony armchairs. Mrs. Lee's work-basket with its confusion of sewing materials added the finishing touch of homely comfort to the place.

"Eleanor," he said very gently, as she continued to play.

The girl glanced over her shoulder at him, nodded,

and went on with her soft trills and flourishes, humming a little tune.

"Leave the piano, if you please, and come talk to me."

"Listen while you talk, you mean," she playfully corrected, pausing as she crossed the room to pick up the big yellow cat from the velvet cushion where he blissfully reposed and take him in her arms. She seated herself with the cat on her lap, calling him pet names.

"Do put down that cat," the man exclaimed impatiently. "How can I speak to you seriously and secure your attention when you are hugging a cat. I loathe cats."

"And I love them," she replied with emphasis. "'Tis as well that this one lives here, isn't it? He would not fare well at your hands, poor old pussy!"

"Oh, I would not abuse him," said Donald. "I'm not a brute. Cats are very well in their place, but their place is the kitchen, not the parlor."

"This one sleeps on the foot of my bed," remarked Eleanor, stroking its long golden fur most lovingly. Donald overlooked her remark.

"What I have to say to you, Eleanor, will not take very long. Please attend. You cannot have misunderstood the purpose of my frequent calls, nor failed to see my deep admiration for your rare character. I am sure I have not made a mistake in fixing my affections on you. I ask you, Eleanor, to accept the love of a man who offers you his whole heart, and a strong arm to lean upon in the journey of life. I beg you to accept my hand. Will you, dear Eleanor, become my wife?"

As nothing had led up to this proposal the girl was thoroughly surprised. The avowal was poured forth in measured tones, with a manner of the utmost confidence. Mr. Waugh paused for a reply. He anticipated a yes, perhaps a grateful one, and took a step nearer. Another instant and he hoped he might take her into his arms. But he was not going to frighten her. "Poor little bird," he thought with chivalry, "how she trembles. I have been too sudden. I have alarmed her, I should have been more tactful."

But tact and Donald were not often associated.

"One little word, Eleanor, just one, dearest, will be a pledge for life, and then may I claim you as my wife to be?" He advanced eagerly.

Eleanor jumped up, and dropped the cat, her eyes blazing. "Have you lost your wits altogether, Donald," she exclaimed. "What madness has come over you? Why I wouldn't marry you if you were the Emperor of India. You ask for one little word; here it is. No. And you have taken a mean advantage of me, speaking so when mother is not here. Please go home directly and forget this nonsense. Is it perhaps a play?"

A dull red spot grew under each of the man's high cheek bones.

"You are only a child after all," he said. "I am sorry I have startled you. But I will ask you again, when you are older and a woman. Understand me, Eleanor, it is but deferred, I can wait. Your mind may change."

"Never," said Eleanor resolutely, and so they parted. She ran to her mother's room and told her

SUIT OF DONALD WAUGH 31

everything between crying and laughing, and Donald strode moodily home, angry with himself, with her, and with all the world.

That he had made a spectacle of himself that moved Eleanor to mirth when she thought of it next day was not a consideration that affected him in the least. He was amazed at her scornful rejection, but not humiliated, indignant beyond words, but as resolved on his object as ever hunter who pursued a receding quarry, and on the whole, he inclined to set her astonishing behavior down to maiden coyness and an undisciplined mind. "She has been spoiled," he thought. "She was never taught proper respect for the man who should court her. The Judge was a mere puppet in his wife's hands, and far too indulgent to Eleanor. I'll have her yet, and I'll call as usual, ignoring her folly of this evening. I hope her mother will see what a mistake Eleanor is making. Though I ought to have taken Rachel's hint and waited! A woman does see more clearly than a man in some things."

This was a large step forward in common sense, and it may be inferred that his disappointment did Donald no real harm. But he had much to learn. Humility is the hand-maiden of love, and it was said by Him who spoke with authority, and the word has never been repealed, "The meek shall inherit the earth."

Miss Rachel exercised great patience with her brother for the next few days, bearing with his petulance, and brooding over him as good women do, when men of their families are hurt or in trouble. Around the head of the plain spinster well past her

youth, angels just now discerned an aureole, invisible to other eyes than theirs.

Meanwhile the Lees suddenly took flight and went away on a long visit to friends in Baltimore.

III

WHEN HALF GODS GO

MRS. LEE and her girls took a sudden resolution to have a change of scene. Living simply as they did, with only the faithful Norah indoors, and her cousin, a gray little Irishman who was gardener and furnace man and general servitor for every want beyond Norah's willing strength to fill, it was an easy matter to pack the trunks, buy the tickets, and make a quiet flitting. Since the Judge's death, they had been much alone, and Mrs. Lee did not think it necessary to send a good-bye to any except her nearest neighbors, so that when one afternoon Donald Waugh called in fulfillment of his intention not to stay away, he was astonished to learn that all the ladies were absent. Norah volunteered the information that they might remain in Baltimore some months, and Donald turned from the door with the feeling that it had been shut in his face. Vexed with Eleanor before the visit, he was now furious with her mother, and went gloomily homeward in a very bad temper indeed, to find that his sister had invited her great favorite, Mattie Dunmore, to dine and spend the evening. So he had to put his crossness in his pocket for the time.

Miss Dunmore was a nice girl, but had little of the charm which belonged to Eleanor Lee. She was just a nice girl, very popular and a thorough gentle-

woman. Likewise she was the possessor of what in those days was considered a tidy sum of money, some three hundred thousand dollars. An orphan, she lived with an uncle and aunt with whom she was not quite happy. Rachel had long ago in match making moments, fancied how the fitness of things would be satisfied should Donald court Mattie.

As Donald, not in the best of humors, presented himself in the dining-room, there rose to meet him with hand outstretched a compact little lady, trim and neat from her braided brown head to her daintily shod feet. She wore a dress of rich black silk with an edging of lace at throat and wrists, and around her neck was a slender gold chain which ended in the watch pocket at her belt. Hoops were coming in, and Miss Mattie had ventured to wear a small one; it was to her credit that she managed it with a good deal of grace. She smiled at Donald so genially that he felt the ice within him melt. Here at least was a girl without silly caprices who had the ability to know a good thing when she saw it. Donald's wounded vanity was insensibly soothed as Mattie led him on to talk, first of the business situation, and then of the clouds gathering on the national horizon. She was a keen politician and could hold her own in conversation with a well-informed man and for the first time in their acquaintance Donald took note of her personality and decided that she was worth cultivating. Her maid came for her at half-past eight, but her hostess would not let her leave so early, and sent the maid back saying that she would see that Miss Mattie was safely taken home after awhile. At ten o'clock with profuse

thanks for a pleasant evening, she put on her hood and her warm mantilla and Donald gallantly escorted her down the steps of his home, Miss Rachel lingering in the doorway to say good-night. The man offered his arm as custom in that day enjoined, and the young woman took it as a matter of course. The hand she rested on it was feather light, but it conveyed in that soft touch something feminine that did not scorn protection. Islington streets were tranquil under the maple boughs, and girls might and did safely walk there unattended, but this did not alter the fact that if by chance a peril came, a girl much preferred having somebody at her side to meet and vanquish it. Policemen, as is the habit of their kind, were never on hand at the instant they were needed, and who knew at what moment a lurking highwayman might start from behind a shadowy tree-trunk? Mattie Dunmore who had never been selected for much attention by the young men of the village was pleased to be walking home at ten o'clock with Donald Waugh, and on his part he was surprised that he had never before noticed how sensible and appreciative and well-mannered his companion was. Not giddy like Eleanor, he thought, with his smouldering resentment against that disdainful girl. Not beautiful like Eleanor, either, whispered something in his heart, but out of his childhood copy-book, came a tricksy sprite, breathing in his ear. Handsome is that handsome does. Instantly though quite unintentionally Mattie had interested him, had made an impression, and at a moment when the man was susceptible. What the great Dr. Chalmers called the expulsive power of a

new affection, that evening thrust its thin entering wedge into Donald's thoughts. He went home and slept as if girls and their caprices did not exist.

The journey to Baltimore was a delight to the mother and daughters, to the latter having the zest of novelty. The evening of Donald's proposal, Eleanor had thrown herself on her knees beside her mother's bed, and in a hysterical outburst half crying, half laughing, had told her all about it. The mother had felt a strange pang; her little girl was tasting the cup that every woman must sometime drink, honey-sweet, or flavored with bitter herbs, according to her temperament and circumstances. Of one thing she was assured, Eleanor was not yet ready for love. She had still an unawakened heart.

"If you could return Donald Waugh's love, dear, you would have a very pleasant life," she said.

"Mother!" exclaimed Eleanor, aghast. "I'd die before I'd consent to marry that man. Think of his big clumsy hands, that he never knows what to do with, of his red hair, of his odious pomposity. I suppose he's good, but goodness is not everything. He's dreadful. Father could not bear him. He said he was a fearful bore, and he is. The presumption of his daring to think that he might kiss me! I saw that he meant to! I should never, never look at myself in the glass again if I had let him do such a thing. And, mother, he's at least thirty years old!"

To nineteen thirty appears venerable! Particularly when nineteen has not yet left the shelter of the mother's brooding wing. Mrs. Lee dropped the

matter, made Eleanor creep into bed by her, and lay awake long after the child was in dreamland.

From a worldly view-point, Donald Waugh, prosperous, rising and most respectable, was a very desirable son-in-law, but Mrs. Lee knew that Eleanor in her sweet girlish inexperience would not consider matters of convenience, and that the somewhat encumbered Lee estate would never be relieved by a rich marriage on Eleanor's part. The girl was romantic as her father had been. The mother sighed, but her sigh was not sorrowful; she rejoiced that her child was too pure of nature to give herself where she could not yield her whole affection. She was glad to hope that Eleanor might yet find entire happiness in marriage as her mother had. And then she decided on the visit that would do them all good.

In quiet Islington, the little household of women had not yet felt the oppression in the atmosphere that boded the swiftly coming storm. Indeed, few people in the North in the years immediately before the Civil War were keyed to the tension which was everywhere felt in the South. Maryland, as a border state, was divided in sentiment. Mrs. Lee found her brother-in-law and his family deeply exercised about State rights; vehement discussions took place in every social gathering; the burning question was what would the South do, as a whole. When Lincoln was inaugurated, South Carolina, acting on the theory that as the states had originally come together of their own accord, to form a federation, each had as an individual, the privilege of dissolving the connection at pleasure, seceded by a formal act of her legislature. From that pregnant hour, the

country was in a ferment, and new issues, new strifes, new dangers were born daily.

Eleanor and Kathleen were at once swept into the whirl of such gayety as they had never known, and at the same time confronted with excitements hitherto undreamed of. Their cousins were busy making secession flags of silk which they used to drape their rooms, or, in miniature, pinned to their gowns as badges, or presented to their admirers. Parties of girls eagerly contended over the situation and when union and disunion sentiment clashed in the drawing-room, as it often did, the jar was ominous of a sterner and more deadly conflict to come. People went about, grave-eyed, bewildered, uncertain of the morrow, and with an unspoken dread in their souls, but there was notwithstanding a feverish desire for pleasure, and added to this a tendency to social display which were in marked contrast with anything the country had known.

"I came here for a quiet breathing spell," confided Mrs. Lee to her sister, "and lo, my girls are going to teas and dinners and dances, as they never did before; and Kathleen is as yet a child in the schoolroom, while Eleanor has not come out."

"I'm doubtful, Alice," was Mrs. Emmet's reply, "whether you will feel like giving Eleanor a formal introduction in these days. The times that will try women's souls, if not men's, will soon be upon us; let the girls enjoy themselves. Baltimore was never brighter than this winter, and all you have to do is to watch that your Nellie does not lose her heart to some one of the young officers who are her partners in the cotillion. I approve of your prohibiting the round

dance for your girls. I allowed Emily to waltz only with her brothers until she was engaged. Now of course she dances with Jim."

"Eleanor's heart is not in danger yet," said the mother confidently. "It is a folded bud, or a fortified town, or something else inaccessible."

Mrs. Emmet laughed. "You were always poetical, sister," she exclaimed, when she had recovered her composure. "I am not sure that Eleanor Lee is not already in love with Lieutenant Osbourn. There is no doubt about his devotion to her. If you have not seen it, you are blind."

Mrs. Lee was very much disturbed.

"Who is he, this Lieutenant Osbourn? Eleanor has had half a dozen of these young fellows in uniform, hanging about her. I have not observed any special approval on her side, and there's safety in numbers, you know."

"Harry Osbourn is from Ohio, a clever young lawyer before he volunteered and a man of mark, my husband says; one of the men sure to be on the winning list. I fancy he's poor enough, but a girl won't care for that, if he loves her and she loves him."

"Is he a Christian man?" asked Mrs. Lee seriously. Again Mrs. Emmet laughed.

"You are a Puritan, my dear. He's not a Pagan, but whether or not he's a church member, I haven't the faintest idea. Surely you will never make a point of that when it comes to giving your consent to a daughter's marriage."

"I should make no stand on church-membership," said Mrs. Lee, "but I shall feel safer about my girls

if in choosing husbands, they choose God-fearing men, such as their father was, and our father too. A man rises no higher than his ideal, and there can be no loftier ideal for a man than Jesus Christ. If we are drifting as a nation upon evil days, we shall need more than ever to stand fast and show our colors as Christians."

Mrs. Emmet was silenced. She had lost much of her childhood's faith, and grown away from the teachings of her father's house. Mrs. Lee's words brought vividly back a memory of her youth, when there was daily prayer in the home, and her mother had felt and spoken as her sister did now. At the moment, there was no time for further converse. The door opened and a merry troop of young people came in, among them Lieutenant Osbourn in evidently devoted attendance upon Eleanor. Mrs. Lee said nothing but she watched her daughter with tender anxiety in the next few days. She saw Eleanor's eyes brighten and her cheek flush when the Lieutenant was announced; she saw too, the reserve with which the girl surrounded herself when in his company. Eleanor Lee was not to be too lightly won. Yet, day by day, love waved aside the shield of maidenly coyness; and Eleanor, unconsciously absorbed, instinctively resisting, yet slowly yielding, was awakened at last. Her mother had taken her to Baltimore a child. She would go back to Islington, a woman.

The evening before their return Lieutenant Osbourn formally asked Mrs. Lee's consent to his wooing of Eleanor. He told her of his family, his prospects, his love for her daughter, and he satisfied her that his upbringing had been like Eleanor's, in a

Christian home. His record was unstained. He was handsome, candid, and debonair; five years older than Eleanor, and her mother did not wonder at Eleanor's preference for him.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"Not in words," was the answer.

"Only in looks, and flowers, and silence, and homage," said Mrs. Lee, giving him her hand. "I think, Mr. Osbourn, that my daughter likes you. I give you my best wishes."

So it came to pass that Eleanor went home to Islington in June, when the roses were in their glory, an engaged girl, her heart with her lover, whose regiment was now on duty in Washington. Her mother had been a bit disposed to be compassionate over the suffering of Donald Waugh, as she had fancied him cast in iron mould, and had supposed he would at some time renew his siege of Eleanor's obdurate heart. But the first news that she heard when again established in the cottage, was that Mr. Waugh was spending much of his leisure with Mattie Dunmore. It was really a great relief, though no one spoke of them as lovers. Later, when Donald's business took a mighty leap forward, and his contracts were multiplied, the mother had some regrets and misgivings. Why could not Eleanor have mated at home?

Days came and went, those strange early days of the Civil War.

One evening as the little family sat at dinner, Harry Osbourn suddenly appeared, and without the slightest prelude declared that he had come for his wife.

"I want to marry Eleanor without an hour's delay," he exclaimed peremptorily.

"What on earth do you mean, Harry?" said Eleanor's mother.

"Precisely what I say. I have leave of absence for forty-eight hours. I wish to be married to Eleanor to-morrow morning and to carry her back to Washington with me to-morrow night. We are on the eve of tremendous troubles. I may be ordered South at any hour. I may be wounded, or killed in battle. In the one case, I want Eleanor to be able to come to me; in the other, I want her to bear my name. I cannot be put off, darling," he said, turning to Eleanor, "you haven't the wish to oppose me, have you? You will be my wife to-morrow morning. Will you not? Say yes, and I'll go out and engage the minister now."

"Eleanor has nothing ready," interposed Mrs. Lee.

"Oh, what do we care for clothes, at such a time as this," expostulated the impetuous lover. He turned from Mrs. Lee, took Eleanor in his arms, and kissed her with her mother looking on.

"Say yes, my darling. Say 'Harry, I'll do whatever you ask,'" he insisted.

Eleanor blushed, but she lifted up her face to his, with brave eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

"Yes, Harry dear, I'll do whatever you ask," she answered.

They were married at ten the next day, and at three they were enroute to Washington. To the mother the affair bore the unreality of a dream. Only when the days passed, empty without her bright Eleanor, when Kathleen, who had never been

separated from her sister, drooped and lost her gayety, when she packed away the things Eleanor did not want, and sent her those she did, she began to comprehend the finality of this step that had been so sudden. Mrs. Lee suffered acutely from self-blame. To her thought, Eleanor had had a very brief and hasty wooing. She feared she had herself made a mistake in yielding consent so readily and letting her child wed one who was almost a stranger. The first marriage in a family is not unlike the first death, in the vacancy it leaves, and the need for readjustment that follows in its wake. No wonder the bride's mother often has much ~~to do~~ to keep back her tears; she is bidding farewell to a whole heart-full of pleasant occupations that are to be hers no more. And she is tormented at the best of times by a vague uncertainty as to whether the new life, and the new love, are to be rich with blessings for her darling.

Kathleen drooped and was lonely, so Mrs. Lee bestirred herself to comfort her. Also, dimly visible on the horizon's rim was the star of another lover, who should, later, seek Kathleen. But that was not yet. Kathleen was very young.

IV

WAITING DAYS

WHEN Donald Waugh heard the news of Eleanor's marriage, he simply sulked. No other word so clearly expresses a state of mind in which a person obstinately refuses to be appeased, although he has no valid occasion for resentment. That Eleanor had been as free as a bird, in no way bound, so far as he was concerned, did not in the least soften the force of the blow; and for some days he was in a temper best described by the phrase, the black dog on the back. His black looks were in evidence at the mills and everybody from the bookkeeper to the office boy, felt afraid that some sort of dreadful business crisis was impending. At home Donald was moody and silent, eating his meals under protest, and curtly answering his sister when she spoke to him. As for Miss Dunmore, he left her severely to her own company, not going near her house for days. She, naturally annoyed, took the best possible means of meeting her lover's desertion, if lover he were. To do him justice, he had not considered himself in that light. Without a word to any one Miss Dunmore packed her trunks, and joined the great procession which was ever tending towards Washington. The first intimation of her absence came to Donald in a letter received by Miss Rachel Waugh and opened by her one evening as they sat

on the veranda, where in the lingering twilight her brother was reading his evening paper. As Donald had continued to bear himself as a martyr, Miss Rachel, from her earlier sympathy had veered to excusable vexation, and she took something like positive pleasure in giving him her surprising information. She knew it would be rather a shock.

"When did you last call on Mattie, brother?" she asked innocently.

He replied rather testily by another question.

"Why do you inquire?"

"Oh, from curiosity. I did not know that she had left us. Everybody is going it seems. On to Washington is the rule just now."

The man repressed an exclamation. With apparent unconcern he awaited further developments, aware that Miss Rachel had some startling news to impart.

"Mattie feels that in the state of the country every patriotic woman who is without ties, should offer her services. She has joined Miss Dix and her corps of army nurses at the capital. I hope she'll see something of Eleanor Osbourn. I heard to-day that Eleanor's husband has been ordered to the front."

"Mattie Dunmore gone as a nurse! What egregious folly!" exclaimed Mr. Waugh. "Her uncle should have forbidden it. She is too young and inexperienced to go among such scenes. Perfectly absurd I call it!"

"I wonder she didn't tell you of her intention," remarked Miss Rachel, musingly and gazing at Donald with an interrogation in her eyes.

"Well, she couldn't very well as it has happened.

The fact is I've been so broken up over Eleanor's silly step in marrying that popinjay and throwing herself away, that I've not gone anywhere. I've not been near Miss Dunmore for a month."

"After haunting her house, daily, for a previous month! Why Donald! I'm ashamed of you."

Mr. Waugh rose, folded his paper, and turned to go indoors.

"You will oblige me much," he said with dignity, "if you will hereafter mention neither of those young women to me again in any way, shape or manner. I am beyond the age when a man enjoys being made a fool of by your enchanting sex, sister Rachel."

Miss Rachel gasped. She gazed after him amused and a little pitiful. He was such a baby, she thought, this big domineering brother of hers, such a spoiled baby. She was herself a reasonable woman and could not comprehend masculine foibles. It occurred to her that she would go and set a sponge, that her brother might have some rolls of a sort he peculiarly affected, for his next morning's breakfast. Miss Rachel was a practical woman.

"At all events," she mused, "I can keep the poor boy washed and ironed and mended and starched and fed. If ever he marries Mattie she'll do the same. As for Eleanor's husband I foresee reefs in the direction of missing shirt buttons and heavy bread."

Ordered to the front, Harry's regiment surely was, and the fact brought the bride home to her mother's roof. She was reluctant to come, but her objections were overruled. Her husband said he would not feel at ease to leave her in a hotel, by herself, or even

in a quiet boarding-house. He absolutely vetoed the plan of her staying with her Baltimore relatives, and seriously objected to her taking up nursing as she proposed. Eleanor thought nothing could be more appropriate for her than that she too, in this period of tribulation should give herself to serve the nation, and minister to the boys in blue. But Harry persuaded her that it would make him wretched, to feel constantly uneasy and disturbed about the one most precious to him in the world, and with a young wife's usual docility she accepted his decision. She came back to Islington and her mother.

Now followed a twelvemonth of vicissitudes, and varying hopes, of excitements and fears. The Union soldiers were new to hard riding, marching and shooting their enemies, new to foraging, new to everything that war implied. So in a measure were their opponents, yet every Southern country boy had sat a horse from his cradle, and had learned the use of firearms as soon as he was able to pull a trigger. Southerners brought up in town life were handy with rifles and pistols, truculent, accustomed to the personal encounter and less peaceful in the grain than their Northern antagonists. Besides this, every Southern man went into the war with a firmly fixed opinion that his foes were cowards, and was filled with an immovable expectation of easy victory. The North lost at first and lost often.

A deep and wearing solicitude pervaded the home life of both sections. Women, obliged to sit still and wait for tidings, while their best beloved are exposed to deadly peril, have the hardest end of war's terrible experiences to bear; Eleanor hung over the daily

papers and watched the mail with ceaseless forebodings. Her beauty took on a new spirituality as her soul grew deeper and stronger under the discipline of trial. Letters came often. She kept in touch with Harry, till battles broke the connection. There arrived a morning when in the list of casualties, the name of Capt. Harry Osbourn was reported among those who had been taken prisoner by the Confederates.

It almost killed Mrs. Lee to see the gray pallor of misery that settled down on Eleanor's face, when this report reached her. The poor child was petrified. She made no complaint, but she refused to be comforted. Kathleen was shut out of her room, and though she permitted her mother's entrance, she scarcely noticed her comings and goings. Friends called and left messages and flowers. Eleanor might have been a statue for all the attention she paid. Under her dumb despair her heart was clamoring insistently for Harry, Harry!

It was at this time that Donald Waugh, rising above the pettiness of a grudge, proved himself a true friend. He had called, proffering services, but had seen only Mrs. Lee. The roses which had borne his card adorned the drawing-room, but Eleanor had not even glanced at them.

"Why don't you close this house," he suggested, "and go to Baltimore until the war is over? You will be much nearer headquarters and Eleanor may be diverted. The Captain is sure to be exchanged before many weeks, but she must be roused at all hazards. Otherwise you'll have an invalid on your hands."

"You are very good, Donald." Then Mrs. Lee paused. "But if I leave this place everything will be neglected, and I haven't income enough for two homes."

"Nothing need be neglected here, dear lady. May I not take an old friend's privilege and look after this Islington house? The Judge would have told you to trust me."

"He would indeed."

The end of it was, that the Lees broke camp and Eleanor was for the moment, beguiled from her trouble. But they did not choose Baltimore. There were too many tender associations in that delightful city, and the mother thought it better to establish her child in a totally new environment. They sought the quaint old capital of Maryland, beautiful Annapolis, and found a temporary resting-place in a gray colonial mansion which had opened its doors to the wayfaring public as a boarding-house offering the comforts of a home, in a grand and lofty fashion, which rigidly forbade the intrusion of the commercial element in the foreground. Annapolis was laid out by its founders on the plan of a wheel, the State House and the City Hall in the centre, the streets radiating from the hub, like spokes. Many fine old houses still maintained an aspect of faded grandeur in the sixties, and in some of them fair women kept poverty hidden as if it had been crime, and dared misfortune with the air of queens regnant.

Notwithstanding her overwhelming distress at the unknown sufferings which her husband might be enduring, Eleanor was interested in her new quarters. Her room which Kathleen shared, had been designed

by the original owner of the mansion, a colonial governor of Maryland, with a view to the pomp and circumstance which he thought befitted an idolized only daughter. The windows, deeply embrasured, gave upon a neglected garden where thick and sombre hedges of box separated flower-beds in which sturdy annuals throve without culture. Directly under the west window there was a terrace adorned with box-trees trained in formal shapes, and representing Queen Elizabeth, and a group of her maids of honor. An old rose-bush, a bush that bore white roses pure as the robes of the saints and sweet as honey, tapped against the pane. The wrens loved this bush, and made nests in its branches. In the middle distance was a crêpe myrtle, which Eleanor fancied bore a succession of blossoms. At least their color was processional from faintest pink to deepest crimson, and the tree was a magnificent bouquet for weeks together. The magnolia *grandiflora* with its splendid flower was a delight, and Eleanor, against her will, found herself forgetting her grief and loving the beautiful old Southern garden.

Two sides of her chamber from ceiling to floor were panelled in long mirrors. Here the Governor's daughter and her girl friends in the vanished days of a ceremonious past, had surveyed themselves when dressed for their parties; for dance or minuet, or sumptuous feast. Kathleen pirouetted in front of these looking glasses and trailed the whiteness of her first long dress before them in a satisfaction which Mrs. Lee did not reprove, so glad was she to have one happy daughter to keep her company.

As for the house, it was managed by Cephas, and managed well. Cephas, with his ebony face, and air of grandeur, Cephas, who catered, marketed, and kept accounts, who welcomed the arriving and speeded the departing guest. What did not Cephas do? He certainly assisted the cook, and was responsible for many of the tempting dishes which were served on the table. He was the most immaculate of butlers. He was the most imperturbable and courteous and ubiquitous of major-domos. Between the aristocratic mistress of the mansion who sometimes, but not invariably, deigned to preside at her dinner-table, and the incoming surge of strangers from Yankeedom whose fees kept starvation from the door, Cephas stood like the rock that resists the wave. It might foam at his feet, but not one whit did he lose of his incomparable and majestic politeness; he was master of the situation and equal to every emergency, this black Cephas of unknown age, whose only indulgence was on Sabbath evenings when he sat in the foremost seat and led the singing in the African Methodist church. Then indeed was Cephas a personage.

The lady of the manor, delicate, coquettish, petite, with an air of extreme dependence and the effect of a snowflake in her soft fragility, was a puzzle to Mrs. Lee. No Northern woman of her type existed in those days. Southern in her birth and breeding, she bore beneath her superficial languor and indolence, an ability to toil, to endure, and to carry out her purposes which was simply untiring and unconquerable. An appealing ingenuousness of manner, childlike in its sweetness, covered depths of resolu-

tion, which few women surpass; she could and did drive hard bargains—through Cephas—unsuspected by her patrons, who haggled with him in vain. He was as granite when concessions were demanded, but he kept the house in such comfort that those who dwelt there felt ashamed to seem unwilling to pay the high prices asked. The patrons of the house were largely Army folk, or people coming and going because of the unsettled condition of the country: people who were on the way to Washington, or returning thence. Mrs. Lee was more than pleased that she had chosen to stay awhile in Annapolis, when a camp for paroled prisoners was presently established a mile or two from its outer limits. Eleanor, too, began to hope, and hope brought back a faint rose flush to cheeks that had grown very pale.

V

WHEN SOULS WERE TRIED

IN the immediate excitement of the hour, great bitterness was felt by those on either side of the tremendous conflict, who had loved ones detained as prisoners. If in Southern prisons, our men were subjected to harsh treatment, crowded in noisome quarters, and famished on miserably short rations, their captors were less to blame than we then imagined. They too were living on famine supplies, and making a gallant fight against fearful odds, and they had not wherewithal to house prisoners of war in decency or common comfort. Southern men in Northern war prisons had their tales to tell of hardship, cold, and suffering. As General Sherman pithily said, "War is cruel and you cannot refine it." At the distance of forty years, prejudices are softened, and vision grows clearer, as the perspective widens. We were once too near, and the wounds were too sensitive, to permit of fairness in judgment.

Those days in Annapolis seemed unreal to Eleanor as they wore slowly away. She existed. She did not live. Often she paced the floor, up and down, for an hour at a time, silent, woe-begone, the light all dashed from her bright young face that now looked frozen. Her mother was heart-broken. When our children are little there is no trouble that can touch them, which we cannot soothe, but the

heart-trials of maturity, each person bears alone, and it is no slight grief to stand helplessly by, and see the misery of a child, misery all too great for our assuaging.

Mrs. Lee knew that work is the best palliative for sorrow, so instead of bemoaning Eleanor's fate, she insisted on taking a cheerful view of probabilities. "You'll hear good news to-morrow if not to-day," she said, again and again, with no weakening in her tones. Where did she get that invincible strength? Surely not from man, nor from a blessedly buoyant temperament. It was given her in continually new supplies in answer to her continual prayers, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," and He will make that way plain before thee. In every age the saints have found this verified. It was verified day by day by Mrs. Lee.

After the establishment of the camp, hospitals were needed, for the poor fellows who came up from the South by train and transport were in need of medicine, nursing and ministry. Gaunt skeletons of the strong young fellows who had marched away to sound of drum and bugle, with flags flying and thousands cheering, their own mothers would not have known them when they came back. Fever-smitten, starved, dirty beyond belief, in rags and tatters, they looked like the veriest scarecrows, as they tottered on shore, glad to be under the old banner once more.

Nurses were plenty, among them Mattie Dunmore, doing good work, but there was enough for volunteers to do, and Mrs. Lee and her daughters helped. Eleanor would go from cot to cot, obeying the

surgeon's orders, writing letters for some poor man who was wounded, letters that carried great joy and relief to a home in Massachusetts or Indiana, and hearing from the men's lips, the story of their months in prison. From more than one she gathered courage, and gradually merged from despair, and began to feel that she might see her husband before long. Indeed that was a red letter day when she learned, positively, that he was alive, and in Libby, though presently a great sorrow was added, when through the medium of the newspapers, just after, she heard that Capt. Henry Osbourn was one of seven who were being held as hostages for seven Confederates whom the Federals held, and for whom, rumor said, there was danger of the death penalty. Eleanor did not understand it, and she was racked with anxiety, but before long the uttermost danger was over. She was told that Harry was relieved of the great peril that had menaced him and would soon be exchanged.

Knowing this there was something to anticipate. She again took up her life. Color returned to her cheek, and lightness to her step. The picturesque side of her surroundings appealed to her. The music at morning or night the waking bugle call and the evening drum beat, the white camp, with its many tents and orderly streets, the surge of people coming and going, the fires at nightfall, and the men grouped around them, the fitful gayety of life veiling a constant solicitude, all impressed her as she had not imagined she could be impressed.

They attended church, and found much profit in the services, though the preacher and many of the

worshippers were not sympathetic with them. When the pastor prayed that we "might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," the Lees could join in that petition, and when the Bible was read, it was the same Bible they had studied all their days.

Donald Waugh had business which often brought him to Washington and he found it impracticable to go home to Islington without a visit to Annapolis. So the old hotel often had him for a guest and the proprietor became familiar with his stiff dignified figure, and formal manner, a manner consonant with the solidity Donald always expressed. Miss Rachel accompanied him on one occasion and was enthusiastic in her appreciation of the place and the people. She had been deplored the war, and notwithstanding her work on the Sanitary Commission, had scarcely realized how terrible it was, and how relentless how stern its grim hostilities, but now she rose to a higher patriotism. The immortal battle hymn of the republic which Mrs. Julia Ward Howe wrote in those days, speaks the language of those who saw the soldiers come and go in that tumultuous time.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He hath loosed the fateful lightnings of His terrible sharp sword."

It was indeed "a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel," that we read in the days of our Civil War, and "God was marching on."

Donald was assiduous in paying every possible courtesy to the Lees and their affairs at home prospered in his hands. He managed Mrs. Lee's investments,

and in every little and large way made them free of care. Somehow his regard for Eleanor had subtly changed its character. Since she was another man's wife, he could not long for her, and he sternly forbade himself to think of her with the old yearning and love. Had Kathleen been older, he might have transferred his loyalty to her, but she was a mere child in his eyes. Though he had declared himself indifferent to Mattie Dunmore except as he admired her good sense and enjoyed her friendship, his heart was caught in the rebound when he first saw her in the nurse's neat uniform. Print gown, cap and apron set off Mattie's little figure, and she was what Donald most appreciated, competent, womanly, kind and compassionate in this work she had undertaken. He found himself envying the men to whom she gave food and drink, whose wounds she dressed, whose letters she wrote.

Before long he was conscious that the vacant niche in his life could be acceptably filled, if Mattie would consent to fill it. But she was busy, preoccupied, aloof. If he was to gain her hand, he must court her, very humbly and very perseveringly. There was no other way of winning this little brown-haired lady, who knew her own value. She loved Donald but pride forbade her capitulating too soon.

The transport that brought Harry Osbourn to Annapolis was at last announced. With a fast beating heart Eleanor was on the wharf to meet her soldier-husband. But was this he? This wreck of the splendid man she remembered, his eyes looking preternaturally big in the wasted face, his hands like birds' claws, his limbs like sticks, arms and legs

worn to the bone? Harry had suffered fearfully, and was exhausted to the last vestige of strength when he arrived at Camp Parole.

Eleanor felt as if she were receiving his ghost.

"He isn't glad to see me, mother," she wailed.

"Darling child, he is too ill to be glad of anything," the mother answered. "Be thankful he's a living man."

When Donald Waugh returned to Islington, he had a good deal to think of, and much to tell Miss Rachel. The plans for his new house which had been thrust into the darkness of his study closet, emerged from their seclusion, and other plans, hitherto in abeyance, materialized. He was becoming a very rich man. He decided on building a beautiful home. Yet, that he might guard himself from vainglory and greed, Donald Waugh, having a conscience, endowed a home for soldiers' orphans, and sent a generous check to the Sanitary Commission. His was the pen of a ready writer, and he was as fluent on paper as the most fastidious critic, who cared for him, could desire. Miss Mattie Dunmore received letters from him almost every day, and his wooing was not that of a laggard lover.

The Lees thought little about Donald or Mattie. Mrs. Lee went to Washington to seek the influence of those high in authority, and she obtained after much pleading a long leave of absence for Harry. Before long they brought him home to Islington, where Eleanor devoted herself to his care. Convalescence was tedious. Months elapsed before he was pronounced well enough to return to the army, and when he went back his wife went with him,

following his fortunes; staying with or near him, when she could, and, incidentally, taking up some of the burdens and anxieties that heavily tax the soldier's wife. Hardships and anxieties were often Eleanor's portion in this period of her life. She did without luxuries which had been as her daily bread. She was merry over the mishaps that her mother would have mourned. With it all she was very happy, until over the heaven of her life, flitted a shadow, a cloud not bigger than a man's hand, but the portent of a coming tempest.

Most mercifully we do not know beforehand what the future is to bring us. Were it otherwise we could never meet and conquer trouble. The future wears the face of the Sphinx for us every one, and for no other boon of Providence should we be more grateful. Trouble need not crush twice.

VI

THE FIRST SHADOW

TWO young persons thrown together socially, in romantic circumstances, mutually attracted, and marrying after a very brief acquaintance, are not likely to have smooth sailing from the start. The first year of marriage is a time of testing, often a time of trial as well. The Osbourns had been so much apart during their first year of wedlock, that the glamour of the honeymoon was slow to fade. Fading came later. During the strenuous and exciting period of the war, they were so occupied with the events in constant progress, so vividly interested in things beyond their doors, that they had little opportunity to think about themselves. The shadow crept on stealthily. To Harry, his wife was still the exquisite girl whom he had carried off from other suitors, and whose possession filled him with pride and joy. Yet, already he had taken on something of the man's matter-of-fact bearing towards the thing he possessed. Eleanor was his, to love, honor and cherish, but by no means to make a continual fuss over. Had he not assured her of his love, and should not that be enough? Harry, though from Ohio, came of New England stock. He was temperamentally calm and undemonstrative, and to remain expansive was not in his power, though he was seldom lacking in courtesy. His one effort at

expansion had exhausted itself when he had urged on the speedy marriage, which had made Eleanor irrevocably his own. Often during those fearful months of fighting, Harry was actually "dead tired," when he met his wife, too tired for anything beyond the chance to snatch a hurried sleep. If she were harassed or pale, or disturbed, he simply did not notice it, and if she cried until her eyes were red, he fancied the redness was due to the wind, or a cold in her head. He sometimes forgot trifling attentions. Yet, on the whole during that unsettled time Eleanor was moderately happy, though not so happy as she had expected to be. She felt a vague disappointment, why she could not explain.

After the manner of young wives, she was worshipping an ideal. A girl's first love is far more given to an ideal man, than to the man she actually marries, and blessed among women is she who never finds her ideal flawed. The feet of clay trample so ruthlessly over maiden illusions, and their owners are sometimes so little to blame ! Often they are puzzled as to what can be the matter.

When we reflect that every husband comes to every wife, out of an environment and from a training in many ways diverse from hers, that relations-in-law are notoriously tolerated rather than beloved, and that the new household must perforce be erected over the ruins of some old traditions, and the wreckage of some old joys, the wonder is that so many marriages are ultimately successful, as God be praised, they are.

In Baltimore again, on the night when the tidings of Lee's surrender brought to the North the wildest

ecstasy of triumph, as to the South the deepest gloom of despair, Harry Osbourn took Eleanor out to mingle in the crowds that surged through the streets. His uniform proclaimed him one of the conquering host, and men and women whom he had never seen, threw their arms around him and hugged him with rapture.

"There's glory enough for one day!" cried a young man who had four brothers in the Federal army, and whose empty sleeve was eloquent of sacrifice for the Union. He had been wounded at Gettysburg. "Bress de Lord, honey!" ejaculated an old negro, as the shouts rang and reechoed. "Bress de Lord, who hab set His people free!" Eleanor laughed and cried as she was drawn through that excited, glad-hearted throng, the people beside themselves with gratitude that the war was ended. In Monument Square, there were tall houses illuminated from basement to roof, a candle twinkling starlike in every pane, but other houses faced them in funereal black, not a glimmer of light relieving their aspect of heart-broken mourning. Only a few hours later, and the houses of festival-cheer would in turn put on their symbols of sorrow, when Lincoln's assassination had changed the wild joy to bitter grief; while the gloom-shrouded dwellings would throw wide their shutters in brief delight. No hint of the coming martyrdom was yet revealed. Men sang the Star Spangle Banner, and America, and

"Rally round the flag, boys,
Give it to the breeze,"

and those streets of Baltimore that had been stained

with the first blood of the Civil War, when the Massachusetts Sixth was ruthlessly attacked in its passage through the city, resounded to the lilt of "John Brown's Body," and thrilled to the victorious refrain, "For God is marching on!"

Eleanor never forgot that white night, those exultant days.

The war being over, and the troops mustered out, Harry resumed his profession of the law, and established himself in a Southern city. It was thought by his father and his advisers that Northern capital would rapidly flow into this hitherto sleepy old town, and that wealth and prosperity would be the portion of those who should earliest settle there in the auspicious beginnings of peace. The impression was a true one, and the prophecies of the most sanguine have been fulfilled, yet the lot of the Northern men who were pioneers of the throng to follow their steps was not a very enviable one, and their wives had some woefully lonely hours to meet.

"This home is always here for your resting-place, darling," said Mrs. Lee, when she bade Eleanor goodbye in Islington on her going off to the new abode. "And you will surely return here every summer."

"Of course she will come as often as she likes," declared Harry, "and you and Kathleen will visit her. Don't be downhearted. I'm not carrying her to the other side of the globe. Only a few hundred miles, you can see each other as often as you wish, never fear."

Eleanor started for a real home of her own, with high anticipations. She was charmed to think of

being settled, and keeping house, of making a home for Harry, and having him all to herself. The Virginian town selected was not far from tide-water, and so bland was the climate, that flowers bloomed out of doors most of the year, and the winters were mild and lovely. Even in summer nights, cool breezes swept in from the bay, and made blankets needful. On all the Atlantic coast there was no prettier town than Clivedon, which was chosen by Harry and Eleanor for their home.

The English settlers who set their seal upon Virginia brought with them their insular exclusiveness, and the early fashions of well separated homes still obtained in Clivedon. Eleanor's home was a square brick house, with rooms on either side of a broad passage, and a great garden all around it, where violets grew in fragrant beds, and roses fairly rioted. Clumps of peonies, of white lilies, of prince's feather, of southernwood, and ribbon grass, made this pleasure-ounce beautiful. It was surrounded by a high brick wall, in which was a small iron gate, the wall completely concealing house and grounds from the street, and shielding the inmates from the scrutiny of passers-by. Eleanor regretted the wall, it gave her a sense of captivity after the freely shared lawns of Islington, where at most, a hedge or a white paling defined the boundaries of an estate. There came a day when she knelt down and thanked God for that protecting wall.

Harry's people had been generous livers, keeping open house, and entertaining lavishly, so that the usages of the South, which still made it an obligation to offer some refreshment to callers, were in accord

with his ideas of propriety. When Eleanor saw her sideboard provided with wines of costly vintages and several brands of whiskey, she at once demurred; her father had held rigid opinions on the subject of temperance, and she was not ready to adopt other tenets than those in which she had been brought up. That Captain Osbourn was not a total abstainer had been to her a source of regret, but in war days, excuses had been many. The flask with its stimulating liquor had seemed a necessity on the march, and to the wet, weary, half-famished man, who had taken a pull at it, to keep the cold away, it had appeared a positive boon. Yet Eleanor had already worried much over Harry's inclination to go to it too often, and she had made more than one stand against treating others and taking social drinks.

"You precious little Puritan!" the husband had said, on the occasion of one of their last arguments, "whoever would have fancied you could be such a bigot? Why I believe you are afraid of my becoming a toper. Shame on you, Eleanor." Half laughingly reproving her, he had stopped her remonstrances with a kiss.

"Now, look here, wifie! My father and my grandfather and his father, all took what they wanted, *when* they wanted it, and not one of them was ever a mite the worse for the habit. There isn't any harm in the thing, or any danger, and, if I'm to succeed here, I'll have to keep the pace of the place. In Rome do as the Romans do, my dear. I don't insist on your offering wine; offer tea if you prefer to your visitors, but leave me my freedom."

What could Eleanor do? She tried to persuade

herself that she was narrow and foolishly timid. She tried to bear herself courteously when her husband and his guests drank together. And after awhile, though she could not shut her eyes to a certain gradual coarsening of Harry's face, a certain increasing asperity in his temper, yet she endeavored not to associate these features of change with his habits. All around her were men who drank—like gentlemen—and who held that men might drink like gentlemen,—yet never acquire the drunkard's fatal thirst. And the wives seemed not at all concerned. Some of them laughed at Mrs. Osbourn's scruples. Laughed ! They might better have wept. An incident presently brought sudden wide awakening.

"Harry, if you are passing the drug-store to-day will you bring me a little bottle of rose-water?" she asked one morning.

"Certainly, any special variety?"

"No, any delicate extract will do, dear."

An hour or two after his departure, a colored boy appeared bearing a small basket packed to the top with rose-water in flat vials, in round vials and in cut glass bottles large and small. Harry had simply purchased the entire stock in trade of the druggist and sent it home. Eleanor found it unwise to give her husband the smallest marketing to do in a town where men frequently attended to the marketing. He bought as if supplying the commissariat of an army. Then he fumed and scolded, if she asked for money, asserting that they were living at a rate which would soon land them in the poorhouse. They were! But it was not Eleanor's fault.

In court Harry was brilliantly spectacular, an able

pleader, with the sure grasp on facts, and the readiness to turn to the right authorities, which are hall-marks of the well equipped advocate. Before a jury he was at his best, eloquent, convincing, scholarly, and fine.

"You may be proud of your husband, madam," said a courtly judge. "He is received at our bar as if he were a son of the soil." No greater compliment could have been paid in those times and in that state.

Harry had been conducting an unusually involved and fatiguing case, hotly contested by stubborn opponents. To win it against overwhelming odds, was next to impossible, but he persevered, and won, to his own surprise, as well as to the dismay of his antagonists. A large sum of money was at stake, and his gain meant a very handsome fee, which was of less account in his sight, than the honor his success brought him. Yet the money too was opportune.

From the court room he came home, white, haggard, and nervous. Reaction had set in. He could eat none of the tempting dinner Eleanor had provided, but he drank deeply, and with a word of apology went off to bed.

"I'll be rested in the morning," he said. "I'm clear down now. Don't let anybody know I'm at home."

That night Eleanor tasted for the first time the full horror of watching by the bed of a man who was not himself. Harry's face became flushed. His breath came in gasps. He grew violent, raved, cursed and swore. Then followed fright, abject shivering terror that shrank from imaginary foes.

He declared that rats were running up and down the walls, and fairly shrieked for help.

Eleanor aroused her butler and sent him for the doctor. When he arrived, his practiced eye at once recognized the symptoms.

"I have feared this," he said.

"What is it, doctor?" asked the wife, who stood in her white gown beside the bed, as beautiful as an angel, the doctor thought, but sadder than a woman ought ever to be.

The doctor spoke in a low tone, taking her aside into the next room. "Your husband is in danger of delirium tremens, madam, but I hope to control it. I will watch by him till morning, with William's help. It is a first attack, and should yield to treatment."

"Oh, Dr. Abbott, it cannot be that," exclaimed Eleanor in terror. "Harry has been under a terrific strain, and is very, very tired."

"Yes, dear lady, I know," said the doctor. "Leave him to me. And you go to bed. Poor child, you are very young to have so much trouble before you."

VII

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE

THE native strength of character that had enabled Eleanor Lee at eighteen to bear herself bravely under the overwhelming shock of her dear father's sudden death, was not wanting when bitter trial came to the woman. She was young, as the old doctor said, but she had already had some foreshadowing of disaster, and she braced her spirit to resist or to endure whatever might be before her. In the moment of the doctor's words, she summoned all her will, to keep from any outward wavering. While she could do anything for Harry, she remained near him. When at last, soothed and quieted, he slept, she crept away to an upper room, and turned the key. Alone, in the darkness, broken only by the beams of a moon in its last quarter, she gave way; sobs shook her as the wind shakes the reed, and her hot tears fell, but the reed bends, and does not break, and Eleanor, when the tempest had spent itself, knelt and said her prayers, just as she had done from childhood, then lay down and fell asleep. When she awoke, morning had come, with its fragrance and bird-song. Everything was sparkling with dew and the world was fair as if bathed in Eden freshness. She softly opened her door and listened. From her husband's room below stairs, there was no sound. By degrees the scenes

of yesterday returned to her mind. She wondered that everything looked as usual, the sky so blue and bright, the garden so perfumed, the river so full-tided with all its shining waves, and the little fishing boats with their sails spread, leaving harbor for the open sea. Who has not sometimes felt the indifference of Nature to human pain, almost as if it triumphed in its mockery? Eleanor had the child's habit of the morning prayer. She said, "Our Father," and when she came to "Thy will be done," the great comfort of that acceptance suddenly rested her soul, as if an arm had been thrown around her, and new strength from without poured into her heart. The will of God, accepted, adopted, is a pillow on which any head may safely lean.

The door still stood ajar, and there was no sound as yet from Harry's room. The house was astir and the daily routine had begun; the maid was sweeping and dusting and the hall doors were wide open to let the breeze search every corner. From the kitchen in the yard came a familiar before-breakfast thud; it was Aunt Polly making beaten biscuit. Eleanor stepped out to Aunt Polly's realm and sinking into a splint bottomed chair, took a cup of hot coffee, and then gave her orders for the day. She caught up Aunt Polly's youngest, a dimpled pickaninny and held her on her lap. No young thing in the world is prettier than a little black baby. Eleanor lingered, talking over commonplace things with the good old woman. There was a curious dual feeling in Eleanor's mind just then. She was aware of a deep peace, something strong beneath all "the sound and foam" of life, and yet emotionally she was ex-

hausted. The storm of last night's weeping had worn out her power to suffer any more. Yet if suffering should come now, there would be no storm. Of this she felt an assurance as certain as if a divine voice had spoken it in her ear. Aunt Polly shook her head as she saw her go smiling into the house again.

Beside her bedroom door she paused. She saw her Harry, the dear head lying on the pillow, the hand, no longer clenched, passive on the sheet. A nurse for whom Dr. Abbott had found he must send the night before, heard the soft rustle of her gown, and came noiselessly from the other side of the screen that stood between the bed and the door.

"Mr. Osbourn's much better, madam," he said.
"He has been asking for you!"

"Go down and get some breakfast," she replied.
"I'll stay by my husband."

As she entered the room, something caught at her calmness, and her composure was threatened. Such a pity! Such a pity! A choking lump filled her throat! But the distress passed. Again the help from outside was vouchsafed. Ah! to God's children in the midst of the tumult, there is peace, if there is faith. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

But in that day something happened. Eleanor Lee said good-bye to her girlhood. It slipped away like an outworn garment. The wife who stood beside her prostrate husband was clothed upon with maturity. She was all woman now, woman beyond girlish caprice and inexperience for all time to come. She conquered her impulse to fly, and took her seat in a chair beside the bed. Then, flowing in from

some unsuspected recess in her nature, provided for just this crisis, perhaps, ages before she was born, came the courage, the compassion, the indescribable tenderness of a wife's all-comprehending love. Not in vain for most of us, have heroic ancestors lived and wrought, have saintly men and women of our line, been invincible in faith and triumphant in prayer. The fruit of every pure and honest life repeats itself, as harvest follows seed-time through successive generations. Mingled with the wife's gentle pity and tender devotion, was something that Eleanor had not known before, but that never left her again, a brooding and benign desire to shelter and protect this man, the very essence of motherhood that subtly pervades the love of a true woman for her husband.

"Eleanor?"

"Yes, Harry, I am here!"

"Can you ever pardon me? I cannot forgive myself."

"Don't talk about it now, dear husband. Just be quiet and get well."

"I never dreamed of being such a beast, Nellie. If I had, I would have stopped in time, but the thing got me by surprise. I was all tired out, I suppose. I don't understand it yet, but I'm desperately ashamed. You know I never meant to come to you in the state I was last night, to profane this home, Eleanor, and alarm you as I did."

"Don't talk about it, Harry," she pleaded. "All will be well, if you'll listen to the doctor and to me from now on."

The physician, a man of very plain speech, and of

great kindness of heart let Harry alone, until he was about again and at his office. There, one afternoon, when business was over for the lawyer's day, Dr. Abbott called. In clear incisive words, hitting in their brusque candor, straight from the shoulder, he told Harry Osbourn that he was on the highroad to disgrace and death. Harry was wounded and showed it, but the doctor paid no attention.

"My dear fellow," he said, looking keenly into the eyes of the younger man, "there are persons who may indulge without much danger of injury or excess, in moderate drinking. They are of stronger constitution and less sensitive nervous organization than you are. You have turned the corner where you may safely take chances. Throw away every drop of wine, brandy, whiskey, or even beer, that you have in this place. Refuse to drink with friends or clients. Let your wife keep the keys at home. Absolute safety for you lies in total abstinence."

"Aren't you rather hard on a man for one accident, doctor?" said Harry, flushing with annoyance.

"Ah! but this was *not* an accident. If I saw a man making straight for a precipice or steering into the den of a rattlesnake, would I not warn him? I tell you again, Mr. Osbourn, your illness of last week was not an accident. It was as certainly the result of a long course of unwise indulgence as that two and two make four. I warn you solemnly that you haven't the physique to stand many such turns as you've had. Two such attacks or three at the most, will bring you to your death. Remember you are somewhat enfeebled by the war and its hardships. And my friend, you have a great deal to live for!"

Pardon me if I have been blunt, I have warned you."

Harry was silent. He was conscious of a good deal of irritation and protest. This meddling old gentleman was taking advantage of a fellow when he was down.

"Doctor," he said, with an air of conviction, "you are wasting a lot of time on me. I declare to you I've not had the very faintest desire to take a teaspoonful of liquor, since I rose from my bed. My wife's as sure as I am that the affair of last week was a pure accident, that it will never be repeated. Why, the very thought of liquor is a disgust to me, to-day."

"I am glad of that," said the doctor simply. "But nevertheless follow my prescription and heed my counsel. There is no middle course for you, sir. Let drink alone, and you'll be safe to live to a good old age."

Three months slipped by so smoothly and swiftly that one wondered what became of the days. Harry's office absorbed much of his time, and important cases multiplied. He had a gift of eloquence, and was sought after to plead. The South has always set a premium on the convincing orator. Harry felt the delight that brims a man's soul when he sees that he has power over listeners, of an advocate when a jury is as wax in his hands.

Eleanor was occupied with her housekeeping and with society. Northern women were not all welcome in that conservative Virginia town, but Eleanor's charm captivated every one, and she had many friends. Harry had presented her with a pony

and phaeton, and she went for daily drives to the beach or through the woods, often picking up acquaintances and carrying them with her for company. She wrote to her mother and Kathleen inviting them to pay her a long visit.

Three ideal months! Then, the crash came. Came without warning! All Eleanor's life, calamity had a way of springing on her suddenly, like a tiger leaping from ambush.

She had been spending the afternoon with a friend, reading Shakespeare and then they had taken a little drive together. Returning, at almost the hour for their late dinner, she had dropped Mrs. Murray at her door, and turned in at her own gate.

Car'line was standing on the porch, watching for her. She ran down the steps to meet her mistress.

"Oh! Miss Nellie," she cried, "cap'en's done locked the do' and I can't get in to set the table. An' Lawd knows what foolishness he's doin' in thar."

"Hush, Car'line." She spoke sternly, but her heart quaked. She went to the door and tried it. The doors of the library and of the dining-room which were communicating were both locked, and Eleanor heard her husband moving about. She could not imagine what was occurring on the other side of the door.

The servants clustered, a curious group, at the end of the hall. Aunt Polly, with her bright head kerchief over her tightly knotted wool, Car'line, pretty, coffee-colored, and coquettish, William, dignified, and soldierly, all inquisitive, yet sympathetic. To none of them was the drama quite unfamiliar. They knew the ways of men in drink, far better than did

Eleanor, with the background of a home where stimulants were never used except as medicine, and even then with the wariness exercised over poison or gunpowder.

Eleanor dismissed the servants.

"Go away," she said.

"Wouldn't I better stay, Miss Eleanor?"

William's tone was respectful, his look anxious.

"No, William, I don't want you. Please all go to the kitchen, and close that back door."

When they had gone, she tapped softly.

"Harry, please let me in," she spoke in a quiet voice, as one might to a fractious child.

The door was unlocked. Eleanor entered. She did not soon forget the sight that met her gaze.

"Getting ready to moye, Nell," said her husband thickly. "Thought I'd do what I could, before you got home. Hope you approve."

Every curtain was torn from its window and thrown upon a heap in the middle of the floor. The shades had been taken down, and were spread out in long straight lines. From mantel and china cupboard Harry had taken ornaments and cups. Some of them were very precious to Eleanor, but they had suffered damage and wreck, for with hasty hands, the madman had piled or tossed them upon the white heap of curtains.

"You don't like it," he said, with an air of injury. "Impossible to please a woman. Do your best—you can't please her."

He lurched heavily across the room and the hall, threw himself on a divan in the reception room, and was presently lost to everything in the deep sleep of

intoxication. Eleanor turned the key for awhile on that sleep.

Thus sorrowfully ended the first three months of truce with the demon.

The wife had no tears to shed. She stood in her disordered room, in that state of havoc, a few moments unmoved. Then she summoned Car'line and William and hastily, so far as she could, restored it to its usual state. Before she had finished her neighbor, Mrs. Murray called, to invite her to luncheon the next day. She had no excuse ready to offer, and accepted, that Mrs. Murray might the sooner go. By the next day, Harry was oblivious of all that he had done, but it was for his wife, the calm before another storm.

VIII

DAY BY DAY

"MOTHER and Kathleen are coming to make me a visit on their way to Florida." Eleanor was reading her morning mail which had just been brought in from the post-office.

"You don't seem very much pleased," said Mr. Osbourn.

"Of course I am pleased, but —"

"You don't know just how to entertain them? Give Kathleen a party."

"I fancy they would rather take us as we are, and I don't think Kathleen will want anything special done for her. It is a good while since we three have been together."

"Well, we'll do our best," and Harry, gay and debonair, went off for the day.

His wife's eyes followed him wistfully. She had pinned a white flower in his buttonhole, and as he swung out of the gate, he turned and waved his hand. She was reflecting that for some weeks at least there would be no great danger in having her people with her. Eleanor was reckoning on a certain relief from the anxiety that pressed like a stone on her heart most of the time. The heavy hearts that some women carry, hidden behind their smiles, are pitiful. Surely Christ sees them with deep compassion. As Eleanor read her Bible that morning, a

new meaning made itself felt in the Lord's words, "Take no thought for the morrow. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The storm had come and gone. She felt as if in its ground-swell still. The morning slipped away.

A messenger rang the door-bell, and a parcel was handed in. It contained two dress patterns, one of rich black silk, the other of sumptuous white brocade sprinkled with pink rosebuds. A sealed note from her husband fell out of the package.

"Take these for atonement, my darling," he said, "and for goodness sake, stop worrying. I know you are afraid to let your mother come here, but you needn't be. I'll never again, never, descend into the depths I did a week ago. You are an angel, so please accept this from your devoted and penitent Harry."

Eleanor cried a little over the letter and the present, for there was no power of belief, except in her husband's good intentions, left in her heart. But she loved him, not the less in his weakness; even more, she thought, though something very precious, respect, reverence and dependence had gone from their relation. But Love suffereth long and is kind; Love hopeth all things; she would try to hope.

For atonement! Poor Harry! As if thus atonement could be made.

In the bottom of her cedar chest, lay the fragments of a pale blue satin gown of which she had been fond. Harry, in that last maniac fury of his, had taken it from its nail, and cut it into strips, laughing when he saw her consternation. She had bundled it

out of sight, and had fancied that he had no recollection of his act. The letter proved it otherwise.

She was a bit sorry that he had spent so much money just now, for, the exchequer of a drunkard is a bag with holes, and Eleanor knew they were running behind. But she laid away the bravery of the shining silks and thanked him with gracious sweetness when he came home at night.

"If you could but trust me!" he said. "It would be a help!"

People do not always understand that intemperance is a malady, that it has its rhythmic periods and pauses, and that its victim is as much to be commiserated as blamed. In many cases, the efforts to rout the fell disease intrenched in his body, and to recover his lost liberty are brave and sincere. But when the devil has once gone out of a man, unless One strong enough to vanquish him and all his host, take possession of the empty place, and hold the fort, seven devils more malignant than the first may at any time return. Pledges, vows, resolves are like the green withes that Samson burst like tow. Only the grace of God in the heart can produce a permanent cure. Not reformation is wanted, but remedy. Not promises, but a radical change.

Eleanor was to be taught in God's school, how to live by the day. It is an art worth much painstaking to acquire. She feigned not to see that people in town noticed the gradual deterioration in Harry, and she carried her head so regally, that if any pitied her, they did it behind her back. She fulfilled to the letter, the rule she had made for herself, that to no human being would she speak of Harry's lapses from so-

briety; not to mother, sister, friend or acquaintance. Her pastor occasionally called, but though women often gave him confidences, he received none from Eleanor. The old doctor who perfectly knew the battle she was waging, did not dare to offer a helping hand. He went again and again to her husband's office, but when he called at the home, the wife's demeanor forbade the slightest allusion to the trouble. It was a barrier none could cross.

"There must be a skeleton in her closet," said a friend, "but she keeps it there, with the door bolted and barred."

"A very pearl of womanhood," said Dr. Abbott, shaking his shaggy head, "splendid in her courage, but this will kill her, if it lasts much longer, and it's bound to kill *him*."

"There is a way out and up," replied the doctor's wife, the only person with whom he discussed the matter.

"I'd like to find it."

"Ah, dear! That way is only to be found by those who follow a greater healer than you are!"

"Don't, Emilie, don't be unscientific."

"There is a science that transcends yours, dear. If Mr. Osbourn could be converted, through and through, he'd slough off this sin, by Christ's help. I'm praying for him, and for his wife. I feel that some light will be given soon!"

"God grant it," said the doctor reverently. His wife was of those who receive the word as little children do, simply and without reserve, and of such are the kingdom of heaven.

When Mrs. Lee arrived everything was at peace.

She and Kathleen fell in love with the beautiful old town, and liked the people. Eleanor's home life assumed an ideal aspect in their eyes, and they suspected no hidden trouble.

Harry was at his best, a model host, and spared no attentions that were graceful and thoughtful. Recalling the old days of the Judge's triumphs, Mrs. Lee took a sympathetic interest in Harry's professional work, listened when he related stories of his cases, and was able to make intelligent comments, which pleased and drew him out. Kathleen, sparkling, vivacious, with her full share of the family good looks, was a great favorite. Every one urged the Lees to stay, and Eleanor, who could not do so, was half afraid they would wonder at her lack of spontaneity. They thought it due to her yearning for the old home.

"You will both come home to Mattie Dunmore's wedding next month, won't you?" asked Kathleen, the day before they left. "She and Donald are to be married in church, and they are going straight to their new home, without a wedding journey. Mattie says they will take that later. Perhaps go abroad next summer."

"I can't leave," said Harry, "but there's no reason why Eleanor should not be a wedding guest. She ought to go North awhile anyway."

"Well, Donald Waugh being my ancient enemy," said Eleanor laughing, "I see no occasion for leaving you to fend for yourself, while I assist at his wedding. It's odd that Mattie and he have waited so long."

"Not so very odd. Mattie got it into her head that she ought to spend her life as a trained nurse,

and Donald has had hard work persuading her to give up that career. Besides Donald is very busy making money. He's really frightfully rich, you know, and Mattie and he will live in a perfect palace. But he's been too busy to marry, I do believe."

"May they be very, very happy," said Eleanor, quietly.

When her mother and sister had retired that night, Harry brought up the matter again. Eleanor noted with dismay the restlessness of manner that was the precursor of what she had learned to dread. She was relieved that her mother's trunks had gone, and that the travellers were to leave on the express early next day. Heaven grant her to be alone with Harry, if he were on the verge of another outbreak.

"I want you to go to Mr. Waugh's marriage whether I do or not. I'll go if I can manage it. Can't you see, Nellie, that if he's so rich, he may help me to something in the line of a steady job up there? I'm dead tired of this old coach of a town."

"Why, I thought you liked it so much."

"Well, you thought wrong. I can't keep the pace. Thanks to your straight-laced notions abetted by that old fool of a doctor, I'm insulting people and turning off practice every day. A man can't get on here by being a Pharisee."

"Oh! Harry!"

His impatience was so acute that it flashed a warning to her of danger ahead.

She was silent, waiting. Her silence exasperated him in his mood of unreason.

"Don't, for pity's sake, sit there like the sphinx, Eleanor, say something. You needn't be dumb."

"I don't know what to say."

"You used to have plenty to say for yourself, but you have changed. I wish if you can't entertain a man, when heaven knows he's got enough to depress him, you'd pack up and go away with your mother for awhile. Then I wouldn't see your pale face reproaching me. If you mean to stay here, you may as well smile. I won't stand being looked at as if I were the offscouring of the earth."

"Harry, dear Harry, speak low. You'll be overheard."

He scowled. Eleanor turned away to hide the tears that were brimming in her eyes, and to control her quivering lip. She stood tall, white and fair in her night-dress, its folds falling to her feet. Her hair hung in two long braids. Surely her guardian angel was sorry for her, such a child she looked, and in so much distress. A slight noise made her turn round hastily.

"Harry!" she cried, "what are you doing?"

He replied after an instant's hesitation.

"Nothing much. Let me alone."

"But I won't."

He was setting a small flat brown bottle on a little stand which held candles and a match-tray for the night. Beside it was a glass. He lifted the bottle to pour a dram. Eleanor snatched it from him.

"I need this, dear," he said, coaxingly. "I'll need it in the night. Can't you see I am not myself? I am ill."

"In my own room, in my very presence! Oh, Harry, my darling, what ails you? Preparing for what you know will follow!"

"Don't call me darling!" he said savagely. "Don't

you dare speak to me again till you can behave like a wife. I wonder at you, Eleanor! You are a stone!"

It was all done in a second, and neither man nor woman had raised their tones, but Eleanor had snatched the bottle and poured what it held out of the window on the garden bed. Harry faced her, black with anger. She returned his gaze, steadily, fearlessly, till his eyes dropped, and his countenance cleared.

"You little Puritan!" he said. "Where's the harm in one drink? That was all I wanted, I give you my word. And that was good stuff!"

Then she knelt by the bed where he had thrown himself, smoothing his forehead and his hair, kissed him, as a mother might a willful but beloved child.

"Merciful Saviour!" she cried, "must we go through this all again, so soon, so soon?"

"Be still, dear," he said, gently. "Come to rest. I will try to forget about it, and we'll go to sleep."

But Eleanor put him off, and sat by the window the livelong night. Sometimes he slept. Sometimes he resolved to dress and go down town. She restrained him with eyes that did not shrink, soothing him with her voice that had in it the note of a tender authority.

Towards morning, Harry drowsed off, and was apparently fast asleep, and presently Eleanor felt that for the moment it was safe to leave him and relax her vigilance. She went to her dressing-room to bathe and put on her clothes. It was almost day. She was grateful for the dawn. Into her mind came a stanza of an old hymn often sung in prayer-meetings at home.

“ When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie
My grace all-sufficient shall be thy supply.
The flame shall not hurt thee, I only design,
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”

A slight movement in her room made her turn and listen. She hastened back.

Stealthily, like a fleeing burglar, his garments in his hand, Harry was escaping by the window, meaning to climb to the ground. When she spoke to him he came sheepishly back.

“ One drink, Eleanor, will steady my nerves, and tide me over this bout, till your mother and Kathleen are gone. I order you to give it me. You promised to obey, don’t you know ?”

“ Harry, I would die before I would give it you,” she said. “ You shall not have a drop in this house. But I’ll have Polly make you some strong coffee.”

She called from the window to the kitchen where Aunt Polly was bending over her breakfast rolls.

“ Hurry, Aunt Polly, send me a pot of your very strongest coffee, quick.”

The will of the wife controlled the will of the husband, though the tyranny of his appetite was upon him like a strong man armed. He waited for the coffee. And Mrs. Lee and Kathleen set off a little later on their journey South in blissful ignorance of the strife that had been waged under that roof that night.

“ I can’t imagine what makes Eleanor so deathly pale,” said Kathleen.

“ The climate accounts for it,” answered Mrs. Lee.

IX

SOME OF THE NEIGHBORS

THINGS may be trying enough, but they rarely break one down, when one is young and strong and of sanguine temperament. Eleanor had been brought up in a country village where people knew and cared for one another, and it was the most natural impulse in the world for her to seek out and minister to her neighbors in these days. Some of them were friendly, but others held stubbornly aloof. They were embittered by the loss of property, and by the overthrow of the pleasant world to which they had been used. The presence in their midst of United States naval officers, and of a small army contingent, the flags on the shipping in the harbor, and the national airs played by the marine bands, morning and evening were an offense. Most of all they resented the intrusion in the community of prosperous Northerners allied to those who had conquered them, and the women were much slower than the men to forgive and forget. Still, there is magic in sincerity and kindness and Eleanor won her way.

She took the first step one day when she was particularly downcast and was fighting hard to be cheerful.

"Look here," she said to herself. "This will never do. You are throwing away your life, when

you ought to be making the best of it, drawing into your shell, when you ought to be helping along somewhere. But how shall you begin?"

Eleanor had a visiting list, and she looked it over. There were calls she had not returned; many people from Northern states had, like the Osbourns, sought this particular city for business reasons. The naval people formed a charming and quite independent circle of their own but Eleanor was often invited to their luncheons and dinners. Not far from her home was a large boarding-house, conducted by a Southern gentlewoman and thronged by agreeable people from the North. Eleanor knew most of these slightly. But of the Southern neighbors only a very few had called, and those had greatly pleased and attracted her, by their low voices, gentle breeding, and air of dignified reticence.

Close by, in a home that like her own, stood within a walled garden, was a family of whom she had occasional glimpses, a mother and two maiden daughters. The mother, a slender white haired matron, sat in front of her in church, but she did not recall ever observing the other ladies in her company.

"Aunt Polly," she inquired, "who are those ladies next door?"

"Miss Eleanor," answered the old cook with a twinkle in her eye, "dey's de bluest blooded people in dis town, but dey don't 'sociate wif any one."

"Do they never go out?"

"Miss Dora and Miss Clemmie, dey hasn't been outside de gate by daylight in more'n twenty years. Dey creeps out sometimes after dark."

"How very strange!"

"Yas'm," said Aunt Polly, "dey bowed deir heads befo' the storm, dey did," the old woman went on. "Miss Clemmie and Miss Dora was bof proud. When dey brother did somefin' wrong, and people knew, and he ran away, dey never look de world in de face again. Old Miss Mary, dey all's mother was not so proud. Dey was like the Pomfrets; she was a Hayes."

Aunt Polly had a queer feeling of jealousy for this young Northern mistress. In her heart, the black woman had a sort of respect for Southern ladies that she did not give their Northern sisters. She was afraid that Mrs. Osbourn might be snubbed, and she was always on the watch to keep her from treading on dangerous ground. To any one who understood it the by-play was well worth watching.

Aunt Polly reiterated, "De ole lady a Hayes, Miss Eleanor, and de young ladies is Pomfrets froo and froo."

As Eleanor knew nothing of the family traits of either the Hayes or the Pomfret connection, this did not mean much to her, but she determined to effect an entrance into that closed castle if she could. She took a plate of dainty confectionery in her hand, covered it with her finest napkin, and waylaid the old lady as she came home from her marketing.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Pomfret," she said. "May I take a neighbor's privilege, and offer you some of my cakes?"

"How very nice they look;" the old lady beamed graciously, "but you will be robbing yourself."

"Oh not at all; please take the plate home with you, if it isn't too much to add to your basket."

"The basket is not heavy, dear. Our little wants are soon supplied."

The next morning, Aunt Polly with eyes as big as saucers, came in bringing waffles hot from the fire, which Mrs. Pomfret had sent over by a dusky little barefoot maid, for the lady's breakfast, and as a return of the compliment.

It came to pass that these women, who received almost no visitors, and who went nowhere, unbarred their doors and their hearts to Eleanor, and she would slip over the lawn in the morning, a bit of needlework in her hand, to sit with them and sew. They did just two things, or perhaps three, and these three they had been doing without interruption for twenty years. The roses had gone from their cheeks, and the youth from their eyes, as they had sat day by day working scripture scenes, and flower pieces in worsted on canvas, in tent stitch and cross stitch. The house was full of their handiwork. To Eleanor it seemed as if they had distilled their very souls drop by drop at the point of a needle, over this wasteful and useless work, which they never sold, or exhibited, or gave away; by which they simply killed time. When they had spent a certain number of hours at their work, they laid it by and read Plutarch's lives, and Rollin's Ancient History.

"Of course my dear, we read our Bibles, in our own rooms every morning and evening, as all gentle-women do," said Miss Clemmie, "but our father used to advise us to improve our minds with history, and we read these books over and over. No, I thank you, we prefer not to dissipate our powers with anything modern. Mother now, likes a story," as if

mother were a child to be indulged, "if you wish to lend her something, you may, we'll not object."

They grew very fond of Eleanor, and watched for her visits, excusing to one another their interest, and saying that if she had belonged to the place, they could not accept her friendship, but as she was a stranger and probably a sojourner there was no harm. Nevertheless it brightened them to emerge even in this little trembling way from the seclusion in which they had long been buried, and they learned to know as much of Eleanor's life as she was willing to reveal. Only the externals though.

For example, there was the dinner party that came so near shipwreck, a keen mortification at the moment, but an amusing episode as years went by, and it receded into the opaline haze of memory.

Money was not so plenty as it had been. Eleanor had never before felt the pinch of poverty, the misery of not being able to pay a bill when it is presented, the embarrassment of having nothing for current expenses. In her girlhood's home there was always enough though no great surplus and, without display there had been real comfort. She thought of this when Kathleen was with her, and she observed the ease of her mind, her mother's pocketbook, sufficiently supplied, Kathleen's wardrobe, so nicely stocked with little things, gloves, ribbons, shoes, the finishings of a lady's wardrobe. She had been rigidly trained never to disturb capital, and so her little investments, bringing occasional small dividends, did not help her out.

Harry explained elaborately that he had to wait long for his funds, that fees came in slowly, and that

settlements were never prompt. Meanwhile he gave her leave to buy all she wanted on credit, saying that he would pay the bills.

But when she saw his face darken over these very bills, and heard him repeat wonderingly this and the other item, she stopped buying on credit and did without. To her confusion, her husband was at once lavish and penurious. He would buy for her quantities of things she did not need or want, and send her two gowns at once, or present her with expensive toys, such as lace fans or carved ivory chess men, when she was wearing shabby shoes. Life was a good deal of a strain to poor Eleanor. Things grew sordid.

She forgot part of the strain when she sat in the placid little rose-perfumed parlor of the Pomfrets, fragrant with the potpourri of many a summer, and saw the story of the Sleeping Beauty enacted before her eyes. She began to wonder and plan, how she should yet find some wandering Prince and present him to Miss Clemmie or Miss Dora, neither of whom would have looked at a Prince.

Meanwhile Harry urged her to give a dinner. There were some army friends of his at the hotel. They were there for only a few days, and he wished to show them an attention.

"Let the dinner be very good indeed," he said, "I want them to see that you know how to do things."

They had no accounts with butcher, baker or market man. Here, Eleanor had insisted upon paying as she went along, and Harry handed her an extra amount for the bill of fare.

"Send Bob early to market," he said, "before the

best things are picked over." Bob was a new boy, who had temporarily taken William's place, William being ill.

The soup, and the dessert were made ready the day before, all but the ice-cream which Aunt Polly compounded the last thing. When the day of the party arrived it was so beautiful, that after planning her dinner and arranging her house, Eleanor thought she would ask old Mrs. Pomfret to go with her for a drive. They went a good many miles, and the pony cast a shoe; a blacksmith had to be found, and altogether they were late in returning.

"I'll have to hurry," she said. "I must set my own table, and dress, but Aunt Polly's a host, she'll have everything on time."

The old lady shook her head. "Dear, if I were giving a dinner, I'd not stir outside my door all day long."

"Oh, mother never stayed at home when she expected guests," said Eleanor lightly. "She thought it made you so much fresher, to go out, and not to worry over things."

Aunt Polly met her mistress with a face of despair.

"Miss Eleanor, that no-account Bob done gone and never come back, since he went off this morning."

The markets were closed. It was now too late to buy or cook a roast. No chickens were to be had at that hour for broiling.

Eleanor looked up at the clock. Eight people coming to dine by express invitation and nothing to set before them but clear soup, a salad and ice cream. Harry would be so vexed; she felt so mortified. Her chagrin brought tears to her eyes.

Bob never did appear, and he and the ten dollar bill he had carried to market were lost in the limbo of vanished articles from that day on.

"Aunt Polly," said the little mistress, "you've got to conjure up a dinner. There's nothing else to do. Please help me out."

Aunt Polly rose to the occasion.

"You Bill," she called to her husband, who was nodding by her kitchen fire, "you go straight off somewhere and ketch some fish. Or get some fish somehow. Miss Eleanor say she pay for them twice over. Get *spots*, Bill, quick."

"Spots" were peculiarly delicate and toothsome and every evening the fishermen brought boats laden with them, to the city wharves. Aunt Polly knew how to cook them appetizingly, so that they were a feast.

"But what am I to do for a roast?"

Aunt Polly could offer no advice. She had vegetables on, bubbling away on the stove, but a roast of meat, or fowl, was beyond her.

"I shall forage," said the lady of the house with decision. "Or I shall *borrow*. I'm going over to borrow from those people in the house at the corner. I don't know them, but I'll state the extremity."

"Honey, don't," pleaded Aunt Polly, but Eleanor was firm. "Mrs. Moore won't let you tell her."

"I smell something very savory coming from that kitchen," she announced.

Aunt Polly trembled as her mistress proceeded to call on the neighbors who occupied the big house.

To a less direct and less desperate person the situation would have been confusing, for as Eleanor

went up the walk to their porch her unknown neighbors were grouped on their veranda. The oldest lady in the circle came forward to meet her, and the men in the party rose, and remained standing until she passed around the corner with their mother.

"That's Harry Osbourn's wife," said one of them.

"She's very charming," commented the other.

"But it is impertinent to say the least, her calling here," remarked one of the young girls, who heard with surprise Eleanor's modest request for an interview with her mother.

"Don't say that, sister Hattie, you don't know," the brother interposed.

He was touched by Eleanor's self-possession and divined some sort of dilemma. All good men are compassionate when women need a lift.

Meanwhile, as simply as if she had been making an explanation to her own mother at home, Eleanor related the story of the day's absurd catastrophe to a woman and a housewife whom she had never seen before. The lady was a very pronounced foe of all Northerners, she would have said she despised them root and branch, but she had a woman's and a housewife's heart. Also she was a Virginian, bred up in the traditions of Southern hospitality.

"My child, I quite understand," said Mrs. Moore. "Don't tell me any more. Providentially I have a fine pair of roast chickens just done to a turn, I will send them over to you. My family can dine without them. We of course have a ham in the house. I am thankful you came to me. It must be hard for one who does not know Southern negroes to accommodate

herself to them. You did very wrong to trust that boy Bob with so much money. But go home and put on a pretty gown and don't give the matter another thought. You say you have everything else right for your dinner, dear? That is well. You were very wise to come to me."

The amazed group on the piazza were still more stupefied to see their mother take a cordial leave of the guest and to hear her say at parting,

"My daughters and I will call on you soon!"

"Mother!" exclaimed the elder daughter as she quietly returned to the circle.

"You heard what I said, my dear. That young woman is a perfect lady. We will call on her tomorrow."

The dinner passed off without a hitch and not even Harry suspected that his wife had endured her own tribulations over it.

The Moores proved later an acquisition. Through the acquaintance formed in this unconventional fashion the Osbourns were introduced to an exclusive and courtly set of people whom they would not otherwise have met; people of a refinement and cordiality which made intercourse with them most satisfactory.

X

AUNT POLLY'S MORALS

WITHOUT Aunt Polly, Eleanor would have been much like a ship without a helm. She was a perfect tower of defense in some phases of her nature. In others, Polly was rather a puzzle; for while her piety was undoubted, her notions of honesty in little things were vague, and though she coddled Eleanor, and was more than assiduous in waiting on her, hand and foot, she was very severe and even cruel to her own children, of whom she had three. This latter peculiarity was frequently seen in the colored people. They disciplined their children severely, yet no one could doubt their fondness for them, and Eleanor learned at last to bear with fortitude the wails that came from the kitchen when Aunt Polly was in a mood to administer punishment. The children were jolly little beings, and throve apace, not much disturbed by their mother's summary method of knocking them over with a stick from the woodpile when she was angry.

"Pray, Eleanor, how many people live in our kitchen?" said Harry one morning standing by the window and looking out. It was earlier than usual, and he was shaving with the blind drawn up.

"Bill, and Polly, and Ada, Frederick and Jake. You know, don't you, Harry?"

"Well, come and peep out."

They counted eight grown persons and five children, who crept stealthily forth into the daylight, and went their several ways.

"Harry, it can't be possible that our kitchen, with the two little rooms above it, sheltered that crowd over night."

"We'll watch to-morrow morning, if we're awake," said Harry. "They may come again."

They did watch for successive mornings. A varying number of black people left the premises every day in the early light, evidently having slept there. They stole away as silent as shadows.

When Eleanor questioned Aunt Polly on the matter she was confronted by an appearance of offended innocence, little short of majestic.

"Yo shorely is dreamin', Miss Eleanor. Not one soul eber *sleeps* here, 'cept my old man, de chillun and me."

"I tell you, Aunt Polly, I saw them. I was not dreaming. I was awake and dressing."

"La, honey, you done get up too soon," declared Aunt Polly. "Dis place sure is haunted. If you see anybody you done see ghosts and harnts, and if it discontinues, Aunt Polly'll light out, Miss Eleanor. Couldn't stay in no place wif harnts."

Eleanor concluded to be conveniently blind thereafter.

Car'line, the second maid, was Aunt Polly's niece. She was pretty and trim, about Eleanor's build and height, with graceful bearing and correct speech, a well-trained lady's maid. When Eleanor discovered that Car'line quite often surreptitiously borrowed

her handkerchiefs and petticoats to wear to the colored folk's parties, she was naturally indignant and as any Northern mistress would, decided that Car'line should be dismissed on very short notice.

"Please, Miss Eleanor," remonstrated Aunt Polly, "don't send pore Car'line away. I'll reason with her, and she won't do you that way again. I know she's done behaved shameful, but she's like a child, Car'line is, and I'll see that she never touches none of your clothes any more. She'd ought to know clothes ain't like sugar and flour. Any lady'll let her servants hab what dey need of dem things, but Car'line's most extraordinary bad, she is, and *too triflin'*."

Aunt Polly's reasoning with her niece was enforced by a vigorous stamp of her foot, and a good many threats.

"You pore silly no account triflin' gal, why you do Miss Eleanor so, and get yo'self found out? If you do any such fool-things again, I'll tell Sis Clara and Brer Ezekiel and you'll be turned out ob church. Den where'll you be, pore sinner? Hab you nebber heard 'bout de Jeddgement Day when de books are opened, Car'line?"

At this Car'line was properly dismayed, and promised to mend her ways, and kept her word.

"Please, Aunt Polly, don't you tell mammy, nor Brer 'Zekel," she entreated.

"Den, Car'line, you walk straight, and doan't you dare do Miss Eleanor dat way no mo'. What yo' trouble her clothes fo' anyhow, chile?"

Car'line laughed and tossed her head.

"I want to look nice when I go to a party," she said.

Uncle Bill took his pipe out of his mouth. "When you go dance with Robert, you mean? You better let Robert Bruce alone, Car'line. He's too old for yo'. He'll not let you go to parties any mo'."

"I'll marry Robert," she said, "and then nobody won't ever dare to trouble me no mo'."

She did marry Robert before many weeks, a man twice her age but much admired by the colored élite of the place. He was a waiter at the hotel, making good wages, a man whose manners were perfect, modelled as they were, on those of the elegant people who had raised him, in Amelia County, "before the war." Car'line, flighty, silly, coquettish, unscrupulous, became Robert's wife, and the two went to housekeeping in a little cabin near enough Eleanor's home, to permit Car'line's remaining for a time in her service. Even after a roly-poly dumpling of a chocolate-colored baby came, Car'line, not very much sobered, continued to come daily, to perform her work in Eleanor's home, stealing and borrowing no longer, for Robert would not hear of it. He was thrifty and honorable, and exacted good behavior of his wife.

One day, but this was months after, she came in a burst of tears to Eleanor, all her bright prettiness blotted, her eyes swollen, her baby boy in her arms.

"Whatever has happened?" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Has Robert done beat you, honey?" cried Aunt Polly.

"Robert's first wife has come back," said Car'line. "He allow he can't tek care of two wives, so he's done sent me out of the house. I don't mind so much, Miss Eleanor, but I don't want that ole field

hand to use all my things, and she can't hab my baby nohow."

From that day, Car'line was domiciled with her boy in Aunt Polly's kitchen. Aunt Polly declared there was room and to spare for both.

Long ago, when Robert was a young man, he had fallen in love with and married a girl in a neighboring plantation. They had been properly wedded, and the mistress had given the wedding party that was so much prized by the servants on a great estate. The death of her owner had been followed by the sale of his slaves, and Robert's wife had been sold to Georgia. She went away, a young, slim, pretty girl; she tramped back, when the war was over, a footsore, old, weary, homely woman, but she had not forgotten Robert.

As he sat by his fire one windy night, his child on his knee, Car'line on the floor at his feet, the door was pushed open, and without a word of preparation, Miranda walked in. He knew her on the instant, as she knew him. On the instant he made his choice.

"Good-bye, Car'line," he said rising. "Take your child and go. This is my wife. I'm sorry, Car'line, but you are young and handsome. You can find another husband soon. Miranda's old. She can't ever find anybody but me. Marry a boy next time, Car'line. Good-bye."

From that hour, Robert was all devotion to Miranda, who repaid him by making him far more comfortable than Car'line had. Her fried chicken and hominy were much better than Car'line's. But Robert had something chivalrous in him, that took her side. Notwithstanding that she was an incomparable cook,

he did not let her go out to work. He worked for her, and he recommended Car'line as a wife to some one else. The morality of the negroes in those early days of emancipation was a nebulous quantity. They had no standards. The wonder was that there was honor, purity, or goodness among them at all. To play fast and loose with marriage they thought no crime.

This very Robert had been intrusted with a large sum of money to carry across country, when the roads were infested with thieves, and violence was common. It was sent by his young master dying away from home, to his mother, who had been Robert's owner. At great risk, the colored man had brought the package safely to his mistress, and had told her where to find the family silver, which he had himself buried in one of the fields when the armies of North and South were chasing each other across the old home pasture lands.

There was faithfulness in these people, to an ideal of right which they understood, but they lacked fine distinctions and had most confused ideas on many points, particularly of the common things in daily use.

As for truth they seldom had the faintest notion of its importance, they said whatever came handy at the moment and did not mind a scaffolding of lies if it served their purpose.

XI

KATHLEEN

"HOW I do wish there had been eight of us instead of only two!" sighed Kathleen, throwing herself into an attitude of mock despair. "Mother, it is the greatest mistake to have a small family! I shall never stop missing Eleanor."

"Yet, dear, you have your friends and your needle-work guild, and your studies and music; I think you have interests enough."

Kathleen was a modern girl, who kept up her studies of art and literature, in classes and at lectures, and whose charities occupied a large part of her time. Her mother thought her an extremely busy person.

"Mother, darling, nobody whom I meet is like my sister. Does it not strike you that we see her very seldom? Why is she so determined never to leave her home? When I have a husband, he shall not monopolize me, as Harry does Eleanor. I'll begin differently. See if I don't."

Mrs. Lee smiled. The two sisters, absolutely devoted to one another as they were, had a good deal of unlikeness. Kathleen's point of view and Eleanor's were seldom the same.

"I don't like Nellie's letters. I want herself," insisted the one who was still a girl at home, going to the piano and dashing into a brilliant sonata.

She wrote to Eleanor almost daily, giving the gos-

sip of Islington, and the little home items that were sure to be welcome. Eleanor sent her in return long chatty letters, often bright and always entertaining, but Kathleen read between the lines, and sometimes they seemed open as the day and again were curiously impersonal and secretive. Of the neighbors, Eleanor had a great deal to say and of the funny and quaint ways of the colored people, but she avoided so far as she could the subject of her home, and Kathleen was quick to note that she did not very often allude to Harry.

When Eleanor's birthday came, it was the home custom to send her a box, containing a number of gifts; something to look at, a picture or a bit of china, something to eat, bon-bons and a fruit cake, something to wear, jewelry or lace, something to read, the last new book. Ever so much love and tender thought went into Eleanor's birthday box, and Mrs. Lee spent weeks in getting it ready. Kathleen did her share, but, after her visit to Eleanor, it was impressed on her inner consciousness, that they must send money too. Her mother debated the question. Harry might not be pleased. It might be considered indelicate. Thanks to Donald Waugh's wise care of their finances the Lees were now in easy circumstances.

"No, mother, dearest," said Kathleen, "a timely gift of money between relatives is not open to criticism. There are so many ways to use money, Eleanor has her poor people, if she doesn't need it herself—and—I don't believe she'll mention it to Harry!"

"Kathleen! You surprise me. Why a wife naturally tells her husband every single thing."

"It depends, mother. You did. I may. But

Nellie doesn't. I'm not easy in my mind about her or Harry either."

"I cannot imagine why. But I'll send the child a hundred dollars. I wish I'd done it sooner. I can spare it as well as not."

Kathleen was about to explain why, but pulled herself up in time. It would serve no good purpose to alarm and unsettle the little mother. But oh! how it weighed upon Kathleen. For the glory of life had dawned for her, and she was even at the moment hesitating how she should decide, when, certain words she could not longer stave off having been spoken, she must say yes or no to an old, old question ever new in the history of man and woman.

"I would rather be an old maid than a disappointed wife," she said, as she put on her dimity gown, and the ribbon that Dick Deland thought matched her eyes, and went down to the drawing-room to receive him.

On the hall table lay a long letter from Eleanor. Dick pacing up and down waiting for his sweetheart, little thought that his fate was wavering in the balance, as Kathleen slipped into the library to read what her sister had written. Fortunately for Dick, Eleanor had been in a mood of hope and joy when she sent that letter. Harry had been so long his own best self, that her fears were allayed. He had won a difficult case, and taken a brief for a railroad in another of much importance. Not in a long while had the world been so bright and home so cloudless for Eleanor. She had promised too, that if nothing happened, she would make a visit to Islington soon, and stay over the Waugh-Dunmore wedding. Kathleen was so pleased that she trod on air, and that

evening Richard Deland left her with her promise that she would marry him.

Kathleen was of softer fibre than Eleanor. She could not have lived and borne what Eleanor had endured in silence and wifely dignity; she must have cried out; she would probably have died. The petted younger daughter had less stubborn tenacity to bear and suffer than had Eleanor, but, on the other hand, she had possibly swifter sympathy and readier insight. But she had as yet little toleration for the tempted or the tried, having no experience and only the background of a beautifully happy life in a beautifully peaceful home.

"Dick!" she astonished her lover by saying impulsively after she had accepted him. "There is something I forgot. But you are Islington born, so it isn't very likely that you have any bad habits. I want to know that you do not drink liquor, any sort, except of course water, and tea and coffee?"

Dick laughed outright. It was as good as a play, he thought, to see Kathleen's solemn face and hear her ask him about his temperance principles.

"My mother, Miss Kathleen Lee, is President of the Islington Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and I was born in the stronghold of total abstinence."

"I am not asking about your mother, Richard, but about your own self. I have very strong convictions as you know on this point."

"Darling, I have never tasted an intoxicant in my life. I have never so much as smoked a cigar. I never intend to. Does this satisfy you?"

"Yes," she said, simply. "It relieves me."

The weather was cold and a fire of soft coal glowed

in the grate, the flames leaping red and golden, and hissing with a homely sibilant sound which was like a musical accompaniment to the low-toned talk of the lovers.

Richard stood up straight and looked down at Kathleen, who sat in a little rocking-chair that she was fond of. It had been her great-grandmother's chair and now belonged to the latest namesake of that fair dame, a Kathleen Jenks, who in her day had played with hearts, but whose benignant countenance among the family portraits, was not that of a coquette.

"I would as soon thrust my hand into that bed of coals," he said, "as to take one step deliberately on a road that might lead to the loss of my will-power. *Might*, not that I necessarily think it would. I believe I have a good deal of strength, but I should never dare to do what might lead a weaker brother to offend. Why, Kathleen, temperance is in my blood, in my training. It's queer, your making a point of this. Why not enjoin me not to be a thief?"

"I have seen trouble in friends' homes, and have suspected it where I did not see, so I thought I'd speak now," answered Kathleen.

Could they have penetrated by any X-ray, the veil that drops between us and those a little way off, could they have gone a twelve hours' distance by train, they might have had a demonstration of the misery that this one evil, too often condoned, too often slurred over in society, can bring to pass in a home. A commonplace sin, and a commonplace wreck and heartbreak. God pity those who know it from within.

Cold weather had sharpened the air in the Virginian town, and the last of the flowers that had lingered bravely blooming, even after some touches of frost, lay withered on the ground. Eleanor had prepared an inviting supper, and the house with its shaded lamps was as attractive as wifely taste could make it. All round the parlor were low bookcases filled with volumes old and new. The easy-chairs were drawn up to the table, and the very look of the room breathed peace and rest. Harry was late, but Eleanor was used to this, for a client would drop in after hours, or her husband be detained. She felt no solicitude. For the first time in months, her anxiety had taken flight, the edge of worry was dulled. Just then the bolt fell.

She heard a step on the veranda, surely not Harry's, a step that shuffled and stumbled. She heard a fumbling at the latch-key. She sprang and opened the door. Muttering and grumbling Harry entered, and as he put out one hand to steady himself, he sought with the other to draw his wife to him for their evening kiss. She withdrew herself. At that instant the sickening revulsion of feeling was so great she could not kiss him. He turned angrily away, closed the door, and went out into the gathering storm.

"Harry!" she called. "Harry!"

But there was no answer.

She sent Aunt Polly's Bill out to follow him and bring him back, but Bill returned saying, "The night done swallow him up."

So again, as often in the past, Eleanor sat down to a lonely supper. Harry stumbled back after awhile,

the worse for his going. He wandered about the garden, and sat on the porch, refusing to come in. Eleanor wrapped her cloak around her, went to him, coaxed, besought, entreated, and at last succeeded in getting him safe behind the barricade of the door. Once more she was grateful that their home stood alone, encircled by a wall, and that darkness in its friendly cover could hide the shame of their lives from view.

At midnight she sent Bill for the doctor. Harry was raving, and she could do nothing for him. In utter agony of prayer, she threw herself at the foot of her bed, and called upon God to save. It is written that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. In her passion of supplication that night, Eleanor stormed heaven's gate and would not rise, till she had an answer of peace.

The answer came. Long after the doctor had gone, assuring her that the worst was over, and long after Harry slept, Eleanor continued in prayer. Once she stopped all words, her soul lifted up its call without their help. Once, in the middle of her prayer to God, she stopped, and put out her hands with a child's cry, "Oh! mother, mother, come to me, your poor little girl." She wanted the human touch, the mother-love.

But suddenly, an arrest came upon her vehemence. As if a soft hand had been laid on her, she was soothed, as if a voice spoke, she was satisfied.

"Daughter," said One, who still speaks as never man spake, "thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

XII

A LETTER

TO receive a letter from Donald Waugh, and a long one, was an incident to awaken wonder. Eleanor's letters were brought from the post-office morning and evening. As she sat alone at breakfast, the morning after her tempest tossed night, the mail was handed her, and on top was an envelope addressed in Donald Waugh's massive script. His writing was like his character, bold, aggressive, foursquare. In her girlhood, Eleanor had often had notes from him, and occasionally since her marriage, he had written her on one or another theme. The present letter was bulky and long, and she saw that there had been in his mind some good reason for writing it. Donald was never gallant nor complimentary, and, in this hour of her helplessness, she thought with a new sense of gratitude, that he was her friend for all time, a friend as uncompromising as destiny, and as steadfast as a rock.

"You know, Eleanor," he began, "that I am very soon to be married. You know me, and you know Mattie, so that I may speak to you with the most entire freedom. I love Mattie with my whole heart. I have learned to reverence her goodness, her truth, her perfect honesty and nobleness. She is incapable of guile; a woman fit to walk beside a man as

his equal and comrade, and to raise his standards, and hold him to the best that is possible for him to be and do. You will, I am sure, give both of us your best wishes, and I am writing this to-day because I want you and your husband to come to my wedding. I am making it a friend's request.

"I am not a man of intuitive perceptions, Eleanor, and I have always been a blunderer, for that reason. Now I don't want to blunder in what I am saying on this occasion. I have been aware of some things which our Islington people have not suspected, and which your own dear mother does not dream that I have discovered. Indeed, God bless her, she does not herself dream of things that have become patent to me. Never mind how I have found out what you would prefer to keep concealed. Since the day your father died I have constituted myself your guardian in my own mind, and latterly have been as an elder brother, and have felt that you and Kathleen had a brother's claim on me. Whatever success I have achieved in the world I owe largely to Judge Lee, who wielded immense influence over me in the formative period of my life. He was as a father to me when my own father died. Eleanor, pardon me if I am officious or intrusive, but you are in some trouble, and I want to help you. 'The Lord tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.'"

In a gleam of memory, Eleanor, as she read this sentence, saw herself and Donald standing, one on either side of her father as he rested in his last sleep. She recalled the impulsive, hot-tempered girl who resented the comfort offered in the stiff, pe-

dantic phrase, stiff, and pedantic not so much in itself, as on Donald's lips. Where was that girl? Not here. Not in the quiet, controlled, disciplined woman who, reading, smiled in spite of herself, and went calmly on to the next words.

"Your husband is an able lawyer, a brilliant, efficient man, handicapped by one terrible habit which is sure to increase rather than to abate its power over him. You and he cannot fight this thing out alone. There is still a fighting chance for his freedom. I am not writing in the dark, Eleanor. I have sought and obtained information. Your husband must be saved. To this end, he must leave his present environment, leave a place where social drinking is the fashion, and an occasional lapse loses no man caste: must be brought somewhere near strong, true friends. I think your Southern experiment, of which I never approved," here Eleanor again smiled—this was characteristic, indeed, "should come to an end. Return to your own people, and your own town. Islington is growing. It will soon be a great city. I can offer inducements to your husband, legitimate business inducements, which ought to decide him to drop all that he has or may hereafter have, where he is, and settle here. That you may be altogether at ease, I will state that not another soul in Islington, except myself, has any knowledge of anything prejudicial to Mr. Osbourn. As a valiant officer in the Union army, who made a good record, he will be welcomed with open arms. I shall presently place my proposition before him in the appropriate shape, and I count on you to persuade him to accept what I offer, in the spirit in which the offer is made. Your

father's daughter may trust me, and so may that daughter's husband."

With a few more expressions of earnest desire for the welfare of Eleanor and Harry the letter closed: a letter like Donald from beginning to end. Eleanor read and re-read it; went to her desk and wrote a short reply, sending her congratulations on the approaching marriage, and adding, "If it is right for us to return to Islington, I shall be only too happy to turn my face there. I wait with an open mind. I think my husband will not be averse to persuasion."

She dropped Donald's letter in the grate, where she had a handful of pine knots blazing. And for once she thought with grateful affection of this staunch friend of her entire life. Here was a true man.

But it was not in this way that God meant to save Harry.

A woman so proud as Eleanor is instinctively reticent, and to have it forced upon her that the secret she is fain to hide, is discovered by any mortal, is to fill her with terror lest soon it may be bruited from the house-tops.

Had a bird of the air carried the tidings? How had Donald found out? Her mind went over the question as if seeking gropingly for a clue to the answer, but none came. Was there ever to be an end to the wretchedness which had shattered her ideal of home peace, as a rough wind breaks the branches in its path? Faith grew faint. Hope died within her. We are contradictory beings made of opposing qualities, and at the same moment in which Eleanor was grateful to Donald she was deeply

poignantly and rebelliously regretful that she had occasion for gratitude.

Then too she was losing hold of her belief in her husband. If he could not do well in one place, why should he in another? She felt exhausted in the struggle, as she sat by the blazing hearth.

She was still sitting by the fire, white and wan, when the doctor, having paid his morning visit to her husband above stairs, entered the room and took a chair beside her.

"I must prescribe for you, Mrs. Osbourn," he said.
"You want a tonic."

"I suppose I need something," she replied wearily.
"I feel somehow spent."

"What you really need more than anything else is a change. Can you not run off a few days, and visit your people at home?"

"My husband cannot go at present. He has an important case on, and must be in court every day of the next fortnight. Doctor, will he be well enough to be in court to-morrow? A good deal depends upon it."

"Yes, dear lady, I think so. It will be a pull, but the necessity will give him nerve, and he is in no danger of another breakdown at the moment. You may safely leave him in my care."

"You are very good, doctor, our best friend, but my mind is made up. I will never leave my husband for so much as a day while there is the shadow of a reason for thinking that my being by him can do him any good."

The doctor rose and bowed over her hand. As he did so, he said cheerily,

"If love and truth and wifely faithfulness count for anything, plus medical skill, you and I ought to be able yet to extricate a splendid fellow from the bog in which he is stuck fast, more's the pity. Rely upon it, madam, I will stand by you to the last ditch."

But this, too, was not God's way of saving Harry.

When, in the evening, Harry was out of bed and dressed, and, as usual, in a collapse, depressed and silent, his wife put aside his excuses and profuse regrets. She tried to talk of everything except themselves.

Presently he broke out, "Good heavens, Eleanor, if you were to give me up altogether, I couldn't blame you. I wonder you don't, when I think of the home I took you from, and the sweetness of its life, and realize what I've plunged you into. I wonder you don't fly from me as if I were the plague. Many women would abandon such a wretch as I am without further parley. I'm not worth your little finger, dear, yet you stand by me still. I could kiss the hem of your garment, but if you left me, you would be within your rights."

"Harry!" exclaimed Eleanor, her cheek flushing, "I never wish you to speak in this way again. Whatever you are, whatever you do, you are my husband. You and I are one in God's sight, and we cannot be separated. I shall never stop loving you, dear, and while I love you, I shall always live with you, and I have never doubted for a second that you love me. This calamity does not touch my love, though it breaks my heart."

She knelt at his side, and looked at him with

mournful eyes. The man's heart was aching, too. He lifted her gently up and stood by her side.

"As God is my witness, Eleanor, there must be a way out. I vow that I will take the first step in it, the instant He makes it plain to me. My dear wife, try to trust me this time."

Eleanor's face was illumined with that inner light that comes from unfaltering faith in God.

"We will trust our Father," she said.

XIII

GOD'S WAY

DR. ABBOTT was putting on overcoat and gloves to go on his rounds, and his wife, who hardly reached his shoulder, was helping him. By her intent and far-away look, the doctor knew she was not thinking of him, so much as of something in her mind, and as he knew most of her thoughts through a rare sympathy, born of long comradeship, he was prepared to hear her say without preface,

"Hervey, I'm going to make a call. I mean to have a talk with that poor young thing, Mrs. Henry Osbourn. It is my duty. Not one of us has really helped her in her great trouble."

"I've tried," said the doctor drily.

"Of course, and you are a great and constant help. But she needs sympathy, and I must give it her, tangible sympathy, dear."

"I'd like to be behind the door when you try it. You'll not succeed, my child. Of all the proud women in this world of ours, the reserved, the queenly, that little woman is the proudest, the most reticent, the queenliest. She won't confide in you, and she won't be pitied. I must be off. Don't wait dinner for me, I've a tremendously long round before me."

"Wait one minute, dear. I'm going there this

morning with a purpose. I shall invite her and her husband to attend our revival meetings, and to begin to-night."

Dr. Abbott threw back his head and laughed long and heartily.

"You blessed old saint!" he returned. "They won't go. They are Presbyterians. What on earth should they do in a Methodist meeting? What has come over you, Emilie?"

"I can't explain it, Hervey, but I've been making those two neighbors of ours the subject of constant, urgent prayer for the last month. Sometimes I am so moved by their necessity that I have to drop my sewing and go off by myself, in the very middle of the morning, and talk with God about them. Now, you and I believe, and it is our comfort, that the Spirit guides our intercessions. I *know* my prayer has been heard: *know* it, mark you." She paused, and went on calmly, "That man is just as much saved this minute as you and I. The demon is to be cast out of him completely. *Is* cast out this very instant."

"Temporarily, yes. But only to return with far greater violence. Emilie Abbott, unless the Lord works a miracle, Harry Osbourn *must* go down, *must* end in the grave of the drunkard. And it won't take very long. If it were not for a hereafter, I'd not be sorry. Then his wife would be released."

"Does she not love him?"

"Love him? I should think so. With all her brave heart. What good does that do? It hasn't influenced him."

"It reflects Christ's love, Hervey. Now you watch. The Lord does work miracles yet, can work them whenever He chooses. We are so foolish to fancy that He ever stopped working them, or only did them in Galilee when He was here among the disciples. I must not keep you standing with your coat on."

The doctor went. The day was raw, but there was a warm glow at his heart. He drove from house to house: everywhere greeted as the physician is with anxious affection, leaving in one and another sick room a benediction; giving out virtue by his very presence as his Master did. Somehow, that Master was very real to Hervey Abbott that day.

"That wife of mine," he mused, "goes through this world seeing the Christ as He was when here on earth. Her hand is never out of His. I wonder if she isn't in the right, and her religion a vital thing because of it? She dwells in such sunshine, bless her!"

Eleanor was suffering from reaction. Her skies were veiled. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," she exclaimed, but her buoyancy was gone. She felt like an exhausted swimmer buffeting the waves, and clinging at last with loosening hold to the rope thrown from shore. More and more, she secluded herself, lived in her home and her garden, grateful for the brick wall and the privacy. She was growing thin and white, and her eyes were large in her sorrowful face. For Harry's sake she tried to be cheerful, and with her whole soul, she sought to receive each day as a new gift from God, and to be delivered from fear of the morrow. But life was not

easy. She was engaged this morning in something nearly as unprofitable as foreboding. She was reviewing the dreary past. For some of us, the best wisdom is expressed in concrete form, when we press on "forgetting the things which are behind." The intervals between these sporadic outbreaks, which swept her home like a cyclone, were growing briefer. As she reflected, it was evident to her that they were preceded by fewer danger signals. To her thought, the demon pounced upon Harry, as a beast springs from ambush, and Harry's resistance was growing feebler. She was getting so tired; so tired and worn out. Between the attacks, he was the courteous gentleman. Following each excess, when it was past, her husband suffered agonies of shame and remorse. He almost grovelled in repentance. Over and over he begged her pardon. Over and over called himself a brute, wished himself dead, and out of her way. There were times when she feared he might do some desperate thing, and so put knife and pistol where they were beyond his reach. Gradually she had so arranged the house that it looked naked to her eye, though truly its simplicity was restful. She thought it resembled a schooner sailing under bare poles, for she had prudently packed away the breakable ornaments. There had been times when Harry's mood was one of mischief, and bric-a-brac, china, and furniture went down before him as chaff before the wind. It was living on the crust of a volcano, this continual fretting strain, and she was tired, tired. She longed for the relief of speech to some one. But pride still forbade speech, pride and indomitable wifely loyalty.

Thus sitting alone in her morning room, with its outlook on the desolate garden, thinking of the past, feeling strength gone, the door opened and without announcement, a little white-haired lady came in.

"I wouldn't let Car'line ask if you would see me, dear. I walked straight in," she said.

"Mrs. Abbott?"

"Yes, dear, Dr. Abbott's old wife, who never makes calls, but who knows you very well. I won't beat about the bush, my child. I am here to be what I can to you."

Eleanor drew herself up. But Mrs. Abbott took no notice.

"You know, dear, our blessed Lord has His messengers. He sent Ananias to Paul, you remember? Well, child, He's sent me to you. I want you and your husband to do me a favor. Come with me this evening at eight o'clock to the little meeting a few of us who love the Lord will hold in the Green Street Methodist Church."

Eleanor looked her surprise. This was most unconventional.

"Dear lady," she answered gently, "my husband doesn't go to prayer-meeting. Not even in our own church. I'm sure he won't be persuaded."

"You ask him, dear."

"It won't be worth while."

"You ask him," the lady repeated. Her sweet, old face was wistful and resolved.

Suddenly Eleanor melted. She was at the point of breaking. She had repelled sympathy so long, that she was as if encased in iron, but there was a

motherly tenderness in Mrs. Abbott that she could not withstand. It was as when the ice melts in spring, the thaw swept all before it.

"You know about us, don't you, Mrs. Abbott? You know what ails my Harry?"

"Yes, dear child, I know."

"Do you know that there is nothing before him but to grow worse and worse, and weaker and weaker, till he dies, that we are losing everything, that character and reputation, and all his moral sense, all his manhood, must go down in this wreck? Oh, Mrs. Abbott, do you know?"

"My child, I know. And I know another thing. That there is hope, and that he may be saved. That there are glad days before you, yet."

Mrs. Abbott spoke with a tranquil assurance that was balm to Eleanor's heartache. A light beamed on her darkness. The clouds were lifting. But she only answered,

"Dr. Abbott does not think so."

"Never mind Dr. Abbott. Other men as far on the rough downhill road as your husband, have been saved, and yours shall be. But by no earthly means. By no mere human hands. If your husband gives himself to Christ, Christ will take the desire away, as well as reinforce the faltering will. Dear child, I know. I have been praying for you both, by night and day, for weeks and weeks. I am sure he will rise to a new manhood."

When Harry came to dinner, Eleanor rather timidly preferred her request that he would go with her that evening to the Methodist prayer-meeting. She half expected a refusal, but she had promised Mrs. Abbott

that she would ask. Harry showed neither surprise nor reluctance.

"Why, of course, dear, if you wish it," he said. "They are having great meetings there, I am told." Then reminiscently, he went on, "You never knew it, but when I was a little shaver, my Aunt Phebe, who was a very good woman, the salt of the earth, used to take me with her to revival meetings, and I remember the singing. We'll go early, Eleanor, and get a pew near the front. Then we'll see the people go up to the anxious seat."

"Oh! Harry, you'll not make fun of anything, will you?"

"For what do you take me, Eleanor? The reason I said that, is evident enough. The interest of such a meeting culminates in the personal equation, and we may as well see the thing through. Maybe this is the first step we spoke of last night."

In this spirit, not exactly of repentance for sin or longing for a better life, but of faint curiosity and acquiescence and fainter hope, Harry set out that evening, an evening which proved eventful in his experience, beyond anything he could have anticipated.

They were a trifle late, though Eleanor had started in season, for on the way, an acquaintance had happened to meet them, and had insisted on a long conversation, while standing on a street corner, though Harry tried to put him off until the next day.

"I couldn't offend him, Eleanor," he said apologetically, as the man, satisfied, went on his way. "My practice has fallen off a little, and he's one of my best clients."

Being late, and the seats in the back of the room all taken, there was nothing to do but to walk through the aisle to the front, and the pair were installed just behind the foremost row of pews. Nobody took any notice of them. The meeting was not on that plane. It had gone deeper than that.

A young man was in the pulpit. He was reading from *Colossians*, and when he had finished he made a very simple, childlike prayer. Others followed, but there was nothing whatever that was dramatic or sensational or out of the common. It might have been styled a dull prayer-meeting, for there were spaces of waiting silence when not one word was said, until, perhaps, somebody started a hymn, and a verse or two would be sung. The leader spoke seldom, and Eleanor grew nervous lest her husband should be bored, and wished herself away. She stole a glance at his face. It fascinated her, and she looked again. Harry's gaze was rapt, but it was not at the leader he was looking. His face was impulsive; his eyes were on something, or some One that Eleanor could not see. When the leader, in low, persuasive tones, spoke of pardon for the erring, of rehabilitation, of the Holy Ghost filling the heart and life, and then, pausing, requested all who wished the great gift of peace and pardon to come forward, kneel down, and be prayed for, to Eleanor's utter astonishment, her husband rose, left her side, and was first to bow knee and head at the mourner's bench.

Long afterwards Harry told Eleanor of the conflict that raged within him that night. A conflict so stern, so implacable, that it shook his very soul beneath its outward calm. In one instant, he had a

realizing sense of his wickedness, and of the impossibility humanly speaking of escaping his bondage. Then, he was aware of two forces within him, each pulling, straining; the devil doing his utmost to keep his prey, the Lord redeeming His servant. The prayers of the good mother who had brought him up, rose in his memory. The heart-break of the wife at his side, pierced him like an arrow. He saw nothing, heard nothing, knew nothing of what was going on about him, until there penetrated his consciousness the invitation to step to the altar. In the words of one, who, many years ago, after a course of wild dissipation, found redemption in Christ's grace, this man, at that moment, gave himself up. "Lord, I accept Thy will; damn or save!" was the language of his heart. From that evening Harry was a different man: old things passed away; all things became new. No greater change occurred to Paul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, than to Harry Osbourn in the Methodist prayer-meeting that night of his sudden conversion. He turned his back on the whole of his past, and began over again. From that time, he seldom had, during a long life, so much as a passing inclination to taste any intoxicant. From that time, he was almost if not altogether a free man.

But kneeling there he had not knelt alone. Eleanor had risen and followed him; at the supreme moment when he gave his life into God's hands, to be broken or mended, as God's will should elect, her soft warm hand slipped into his, and the touch of her human love was mingled with the divine accolade.

Let no one say that this was an impossible conversion. It was not even unscientific. More than one

psychologist, not necessarily a Christian, has chronicled the fact that the only cure for dipsomania is religiomaniac. The new man in Christ Jesus loses the old sin and it is cast behind his back. We limit by our small ability, the measureless power of the Holy Spirit, and dare to think that because we fail miserably where we attempt to rescue men, the great God must fail too.

XIV

A VANISHED HOPE

THAT evening was the turning-point in the married life of the Osbourns. The new peace was so full, so dear, that little by little the home took on more than the sacredness it had held at any previous time, and the wife, surrounded by her husband's devotion and waited upon with a tenderness which was loverlike, was more than happy, she was blessed. They did not go to the wedding of the Waughs, though when the cards came they planned to do so, but there were difficulties, and Eleanor found them insurmountable. For one thing there came an unseasonable storm, that made travelling disagreeable for the week which would have seen their start, and besides, as Harry's engagements kept him at home just then, his wife would not go alone. She felt that at this crisis in his life, he needed her companionship.

Donald submitted his business proposal to Harry, but the latter asked for time to consider it. He wrote a frank letter which raised him immensely in Donald's estimation, saying that he did not wish to go from his present environment under any cloud of suspicion, any defeat. "When I have more firmly retrieved my position here, and shown that I can maintain it, then I may be willing to return to the North. My wife feels as I do, that for the present

my place is in this town." In this decision Donald acquiesced.

The Pomfret ladies were busy over a new kind of sewing. Eleanor had persuaded them some time ago, to change the everlasting worsted work for little garments which were needed in hospitals and orphanages, and had even induced them to buy a sewing machine. Mrs. Moore saw that machine enter their door, with the feeling that the world was tumbling about her ears.

"Hattie Moore, that little Mrs. Osbourn has wrought a perfect revolution. I never saw so wonderful a thing. The Pomfret girls may emerge from their prison yet! A sewing machine in that house. It might as well have been in the ark!"

"Poor old things!" said Hattie, who was sweet and twenty, and thought the Pomfrets antediluvian indeed.

With delicate reticence, and shy blushes, as if they were intruding on a mystery, unfit for virginal ken, Miss Dora and Miss Clemmie, in the privacy of their rooms, began to sew for Eleanor. Their mother bought the linen sheer as silk and the dainty lace and embroidery, and brought home to them muslin and lawn, like cobwebs for fineness, and the two gentle old maids set to work on a layette. That coming baby of Eleanor's should have an outfit that a queen's child might wear. All the women concerned about it concurred in this and besides what the mother herself was preparing, Mrs. Lee with the tender pride of one who had long wanted to be a grandmother was getting ready her contribution for the new nursery. Never was a more exquisite basket arranged for any

little stranger in a palace than that which Mrs. Lee brooded over in Islington. Somehow it made her young again as she anticipated seeing the second generation, and she lived over the sacred brooding days of her own hopefulness, before her first-born came, the dearest and most hallowed days ever vouchsafed to woman. Mrs. Lee had no anxiety, only joy as she thought of Eleanor's coming ordeal.

As for Eleanor, herself, the time passed in a dream of bliss. She was radiant, so rich seemed life in the glory of her unfolding maternity. Her beauty was increasing daily. She was more captivating, Harry thought, than she had been as a girl, and he was right. A woman is never so regal, never so dowered with an ineffable and exquisite loveliness, as when she awaits the hour of sacrifice, which shall crown her being with life's highest honor.

Aunt Polly shook her head over Eleanor's high spirits. To Bill she remarked, privately,

"Dat chile too scrumptious! Time she's had ten, like me, she won't be so set up."

But little did Eleanor care what anybody thought, she was simply openly and deliciously happy and could hardly wait for the day to arrive when she should clasp her baby in her arms.

The Pomfrets were of Aunt Polly's mind, but they loved her so, that not even to each other did they breathe the opinion, that until an infant is actually in the world in his proper visible person, it is hardly modest to allude to him even remotely. Eleanor upset their ideas, but they attributed it compassionately to her Northern education and went on loving her.

Winter, the short winter of the South, drifted away, and the white English violets were fragrant in the gardens, where the jonquils and daffodils were hurrying into bloom.

Eleanor revelled in the sweetness of the spring. She thought no spring had ever worn so bright a look, and she spent hours of each day out of doors.

Singing one morning a little Scotch air that Harry was fond of, she came down the veranda meaning to gather a bunch of daffodils. A great bee flew past her intent on some errand, his hum, chiming in with her song. Flying things however harmless were terrors to Eleanor, and she stepped hastily forward to avoid the bee, stumbled on the lowest step, and recovered herself swiftly with a hand that clutched at the rail. She felt a jar, but apprehended no peril.

Yet three days later, Dr. Abbott was hurriedly summoned, the nurse was sent for, and hour after hour, in the extremity of human anguish, the battle between life and death was fought in that household.

"I must have some one else here," said the doctor. "Send for Mrs. Moore." The nearest friend was this Southern neighbor then.

She came, calm, efficient, untroubled. The battle still raged. Eleanor's strength was ebbing. In those days, anesthetics were not often given to soothe birth-pangs, but Dr. Abbott sent for another physician, and chloroform was administered.

The baby was born at last, the dear, hoped-for, first-born son. He was only a little waxen image of surpassing workmanship. He never so much as breathed. His tiny hands were clenched. He looked as if he had fought for his life, and given it up re-

luctantly. Such a peerless baby, the disappointment was too heart-rending.

The Pomfrets knew nothing of the event, till some hours after the doctors had gone and the spent mother was resting quietly, utterly wearied and looking like a broken lily as she lay on her bed.

Harry crossed the road and unlatched their gate. It was the first time in more than a score of years that a man's voice had been heard at their door. He asked for Mrs. Pomfret. When she came he said, in a shaking voice,

"Our little son was born this morning, and was dead. Eleanor would like you to know."

He turned and went gropingly back. A man's grief at so great a sorrow and loss, when first his pride of fatherhood awakes, is a terrible thing. Harry shut himself up in his den, and sobbed in agony. Not since his mother's death had the man broken down and cried like a child. When he came forth, at last, a baptism of resignation had christened him for a higher manhood.

So that was a lonesome spring. Mrs. Lee and Kathleen came after awhile, and brought a whiff of Islington, and Harry, loyally putting himself in the background, did everything to make Eleanor forget her grief. For grief it was. She was not swift in regaining her poise, and the doctor advised a change of air and scene. She was still resolute in her determination not to leave her husband, and he could not go until the summer, so, at last, she made a brave effort to be bright and cheery once more. Kathleen sent for Dick Deland, and he was so merry and full of fun, that, in spite of herself, Elea-

nor returned to something of her old gaiety. The house was filled with young people, evening after evening, and they had cheery times.

"I believe, mother," said Eleanor one day, "that Miss Dora and Miss Clemmie look over at us with longing. Do you suppose it would be possible to coax them to come to Kathleen's birthday party?"

"I fear they won't dare to do so, but you might invite them."

"Their mother does come here, but she has never shut herself up as they have."

"It would be a fine thing for them if they could break their bonds, Nellie. Why don't you try your powers of persuasion?"

"I will."

The next moment she was on her way. Her mother watched her, as, dressed in white, she moved across the garden, turning at the gate to wave her hand.

"If any one can resist my Eleanor, as she is in these days, that person has a heart of adamant," thought the partial mother.

"It isn't fair."

"What isn't fair, Kathleen?"

"That anybody should keep on growing more and more irresistible. Eleanor not only does not fade, she is more charming than she used to be. And look at me!"

Kathleen's piquant face was sadly freckled and unbecomingly heated, and she had drenched her gingham gown and given herself a generally tumbled appearance, due to a vigorous row on the river, and a splashing from the waves, that need not have hap-

pened, had she quietly sat still, when Dick availed himself of what seemed a good chance to give her a rather bearish hug.

"Go and make yourself tidy, dear. There is nothing the matter with you."

"Nothing, dear Mrs. Lee, except that she won't let herself be kissed. You can't approve of that. I wish you would scold her."

"You are two very foolish children," said Mrs. Lee, smiling. "Here's Eleanor returning. I wonder has she succeeded."

Eleanor's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were shining. She actually hurried, a rare thing for her.

"Oh, mother dear, mother dear," she called, "they have said yes. They will both come to the party to-night."

Mrs. Lee glanced at the rooms and concluded that they were in need of several housewifely touches. She enjoyed arranging a home for guests: it had always been her greatest delight to entertain, and now she sent Eleanor to her chamber for a long rest, while she did those last things which every woman likes to do before company comes. Her own heart-ache was hardly less than her daughter's that those baby-garments were all laid away in lavender. Unlike Eleanor, who felt as if this disappointment were final, she still hoped that some other day might dawn and bring the coveted gift from God.

Meanwhile she was as excited as the Pomfrets themselves over their brave step forward into society. It was a plunge indeed.

XV

UNEXPECTED GUESTS

WHEN, very timidly and with a fluttering reluctance that almost made them withdraw from their promise, Dora and Clemmie Pomfret began to dress for the party, their first dismayed thought was that they had nothing to wear. A party requires something festive, and they had dressed in black alpaca for winter, and white muslin for summer, with no special reference to the fashion, during the revolving seasons of many, many years.

"Mamma," said Clemmie, who, though the younger sister always took the lead, "you will have to go over to Mrs. Osbourn's and make our excuses and apologies. We were very weak to yield to that honeyed tongue of hers. What will people say?"

Unexpectedly old Mrs. Pomfret plucked up spirit to reply,

"It is you who are weak, Clementina. The guests neither know you nor your history, so they will say nothing at all. Why should they?"

Dora, who could be obstinate when she made up her mind, declared that she was going, anyway, having promised.

"Though of course we'll be wall-flowers. We were not always wall-flowers, Clemmie."

The old mother sighed. Mothers are very keen of sight, and she perceived only too plainly that these

withered daughters of hers, in a dessicated middle age, were really specimens of girlhood arrested. It hurt her. She was sorry that Eleanor had not let them alone, yet she said nothing. If they could only now begin a simple and wholesome life, it would be such an advance on the entombed life they had been contented with so long. Though she had never approved of it, she had been powerless to modify it in any particular.

"Mother, what shall we wear?" Clementina inquired as if she had been fifteen instead of forty-two.

"We'll take a look in the old cedar chest," said the mother, and gleefully, the three, she who had a girl's heart under her seventy winters, and the two who had never been anything but girls, climbed to the old Pomfret garret, and dragged out the cedar chest. Rich garments were here, a silver-gray brocade, a lilac silk, a shimmering black satin, with old yellow laces, and sashes, broad and glimmering, in changeful lustre. The mother had often aired and unfolded these elegant robes in the years of their disuse, but the younger women had never once looked on them since they had laid them aside. Curiously childlike was their pleasure as they carried the elegant dresses down-stairs, and laid them out for the evening. All day they wandered up and down, unable to settle to anything, watching and waiting for the evening as if they were debutantes.

"You see, mother," said Clemmie, as in the summer dusk, she stood before the looking glass to have the silvery brocade hooked up in the back, "as we have made a new departure, we will not return to

our old ways. I shall go to market to-morrow, and both of us will go to church next Sunday."

The mother smiled. Yet something tugged at her heart. For the sake of their brother, her only son, who had fled none knew where, after a stain had fallen upon a hitherto unspotted name, these sisters had hidden themselves for almost a lifetime. Where was the boy? She had been aware for a decade that Dora and Clementina seldom thought of him; his name was never mentioned. In her prayers it had never been forgotten. It was queer, and unreasonable, and foolish, but it was like a mother, that a strange jealousy should stir in her thought, as she watched the two old-young sisters, in their pleased excitement, dressing for little Kathleen Lee's birthday party.

"I think I won't go," she suddenly announced.

Both sisters turned on her most pleading countenances.

"Then we can't," said Dora disappointed.

"Oh, mother, please go!" urged Clementina.

And Mrs. Pomfret put on her black satin, piled her soft white hair in a pompadour roll, and like an elderly hen with a brood of two flustered chicks, finally went to her neighbor's. Once there, the three were welcomed and made much of, yet with true courtesy no one behaved as if the ladies had not attended every party in every month in every year of a score. They had a beautiful time, and danced, at last, in the Virginia Reel. Going home, Clementina squeezed Dora's arm.

"I do hope it wasn't wicked," she said.

"Wicked? Absurd."

"Maybe we've been wicked all this time feeling so ashamed of poor Max."

The other sister shuddered. It was so long since she had thought of Maxwell Pomfret. Almost there seemed something sinister in mentioning his name, something of ill-omen.

They crept silently into their own rooms, and went to bed. That night old Mrs. Pomfret lay long awake. Very early in the morning she was roused by a handful of earth thrown against the pane. She rose from her bed, stepped to the window and looked out. Her room was on the first floor. Somebody was standing there. She did not recognize him, a gray-haired man respectably clad, but unshaven and unkempt. She looked again and opened the window holding out her arms, a light of love on her wrinkled old face, her eyes shining. The man sprang to her.

"Oh, Max, my boy! my boy!" she exclaimed.

"Mother, you don't tell me to go away again!"

"For twenty years I have been praying you might come home. There was never any need for you to go. Everything was made right for you, Maxwell. If you could but have trusted your mother, my boy, oh! my dear boy!"

The man's rough head was lying against her breast.

"Where have you been?" she said. No answer came.

"Why have you let me suffer so? Why did you never write?"

"Mother," he said, "I meant you all to think me dead. I've been dead to you. I've been mining. I've been going to and fro in the earth. I've brought

back more than I took away. I grew homesick. Virginia pulled me back. Mother, I fought in the army four years. I was Alec Hayes there, but the bullet wasn't made that would kill me, and here I am, your prodigal returned."

The day was fast growing bright. Mrs. Pomfret heard her daughters stirring. She laughed like a girl, the old rippling laugh of Mary Hayes.

"Max," she said, "I do hope Dora and Clemmie will bear the shock of seeing you without fainting away."

About the same time a carriage drew up at the gate before Harry Osbourn's house. The travellers in it, who had arrived by the morning steamer, looked at each other like a pair of conspirators.

"Mattie, after all would we not better tell the man to turn and drive to the hotel?"

"Donald Waugh, when were you so timorous? I told you I meant to give Eleanor a surprise. Let me have my way, please. I think it fun to steal a march on the Osbourns this way, when they wouldn't come to our wedding. I'm going to have my way, and persuade them to go off with us on our trip."

"You are rapidly acquiring a habit of sovereignty, Mrs. Waugh," said Donald. "I find it most useless to oppose you. Do you suppose anybody in the house is up?"

"Somebody's making beaten biscuit."

"Is that pounding a sign of bread-making?"

"Yes, you old dear. And there's Eleanor on the veranda. She was always an early riser."

Thus unexpected guests came on the same day to two adjacent homes and though their arrival together

was accidental, yet it had something unforeseen and providential about it, and the meaning of it was discovered in a future day. I like to think there are no accidents, that in the apparent tangles of our life, the hand of the great Weaver is smoothing out everything, and that all occurs, even the least of the curiously shifting incidents, according to His plan. Herein is the greatest comfort and the greatest strength.

XVI

A MAN IN THE HOUSE

WHAT woeful work would be wrought in many a household, if the idolized dead could come back! Mourn as we may for our nearest and dearest, once the waves have closed over them, they may not return. We fondly think that in any sweet morning, in any heavenly twilight, if they should slip softly in and take the vacant chair by the hearth, our hearts would bound with joy and thankfulness. Yet, when we see, as sometimes we do, the unexpected return of one who has been long away, so long that the grooves of routine have worn to smoothness in his absence, we are aware of a jar if not of a shock. The years are forever silently changing us, not in the outward semblance only, but in the soul-stuff behind it, and no one is gone twenty years or more without coming back a different being in essentials, and finding everybody else a good deal altered. Of only one, among the multitudinous relationships of life, is this untrue. The heart of the mother knows no change. Her boy is her own in his middle age, or to gray hairs, as fully and passionately hers as in his babyhood. She may be clear-sighted and may discern his faults and limitations, but she does not care, nor is her love lessened.

To the Pomfret sisters, their brother came as a perfect stranger, and his return upset them terribly.

The fact of it, and the circumstance that accompanied the fact, were all equally disconcerting. How they hated the sight of him loafing about the garden, and how they loathed the scent of his pipe. They struggled to be kind and sisterly and he plainly saw through their attempt.

A drop of coward's blood in a man's veins is a terrible misfortune.

In his clever and genial youth, Max Pomfret had been a fine fellow well met with high and low; he had taken rank with the foremost in college, and at home had been the model son and brother. The over rigid training of an austere father had helped, in early childhood, to accentuate the boy's innate timidity, and when youth came, and evil communications, taking the shape of a set of reckless companions, had corrupted him, fear was the lion in his path. When the crash came, and he was accused of forgery, Max ran away and stayed away, visions of a convict's cell looming large before him. The proud, severe father was dead. His mother and sisters nearly died of what they thought the family disgrace. They forgot that nobody can be disgraced except by his own act, and that a family name can never be trailed in the dust by the sin of a single individual. The mother grieved less over the disgrace than did her girls. She wept and wearied for her wandering boy, and on many a stormy night she did not sleep for thinking of him off somewhere in the cold world, in suffering or want. Latterly she had ceased to think of him as living. Could Max be alive and make no sign? Alive, and not let her know?

Dora and Clemmie met him with a sort of frightened appeal, a very mixed gladness. He seemed like a tramp. Not a thing about him recalled the brother who had gone. The new Max was coarser, rougher, different and older, so much older than their brother, and having knocked about, for half a lifetime, in queer places, he had grown queer. He did not fit into this cloistered home, as hushed as a convent, fragrant with potpourri, and all hung about with woman's needlework. Neither sister breathed it to the other, but each realized that the house was not half so pleasant with Max in it as with Max away. Clementina shut herself up to think it over, and Dora went out under the crêpe myrtle tree and cried. One good thing his coming, just at the moment, did. It confirmed them in their resolution to mix with the world once more.

"When Sunday comes, Clementina, we'll need bonnets; how are we to get them?"

Dora presented this practical question with an air of distress.

"Send to Miss Reno's for them, I suppose."

"Mother says Miss Reno gave up business ten years ago."

"Well, ask Kathleen Lee to stop at whatever milliner's there is and send us some bonnets home on approval. That's easy. I hope Max won't go to church the first Sunday."

It turned out that Max did not go for many Sundays. The coward drop of blood still asserted its dominion, and the returned wanderer kept out of sight. He pottered around the house and garden, loitered about wherever his mother happened to be,

and smoked innumerable pipes of tobacco, so that the perfume of the potpourri was quite lost in that of the weed. Air the house as they would, it was pervaded by stale tobacco. It did not seem like their house.

Miss Clementina and Miss Dora more and more hated their brother's pipe. Their brother baffled them. He said the most shocking things, scoffed at Plutarch, made open fun of their silly worsted work, talked loudly, as he shuffled about, and, most vexing of all, was late at breakfast. Five times as much cooking had to be done as ever before, Max expecting three meals a day, and bringing a good appetite to every one. Money was plenty with him. The girls, as they still styled themselves in thought, had fears that it had not been honestly come by, but not for worlds would they have ventured to tell their mother this traitorous thought.

One unspoken hope was in both their minds, that Maxwell's stay would be merely transient.

He was supremely unconcerned about their wishes in the matter. As a brother, Max was a failure, perhaps because inevitably, the attitude of the brother (or sister) who stays at home, is that of the elder brother to the prodigal in the parable, a little jealous, a little hostile, a good deal reproachful. The parental heart only can invest the prodigal with the best robe, and put the ring on his finger, and the shoes on his feet.

Yet Max was not all bad. And there were those who liked him.

"Hello, old fellow, can this be you?"

The cordial voice was that of Donald Waugh,

who, with the ladies had come over to call on the Pomfrets. Max generally slouched out of the drawing-room before visitors entered, but he had not heard the approach of these people. He now advanced unabashed.

"It is I indeed, Mr. Waugh. I am glad to see you."

"And how do you happen to be here?"

"This is my home, my mother's home. You know I am a Virginian."

"I cannot tell you how good it is to find you where I can talk over that last invention for finishing cloth," said Donald; "you went off so abruptly, I lost track of you. Now you will come to Islington, man, and stay there, where you are wanted. I'll see to that."

Eleanor observed Donald with increasing amazement. His amiability had so come to the front since his marriage, he was so friendly, so expansive, the change was an occasion of perplexing conjecture. What had caused it? The answer was apparently Mattie, for the stiff, obstinate man, was so far as one could see, most pliable in her hands. Eleanor did not realize that Mattie was already a proficient in the fine art of managing a husband without his suspecting the process. Mr. Waugh was genuinely pleased to see Max Pomfret, who had spent six months at Waugh's Mills only a year before this time. It is truly a little bit of a world, this of ours.

The Waughs were having a very pleasant visit. Mrs. Lee supplied the motherly element in the house party and Kathleen and Dick, as the pair of lovers, furnished the flavor of sentiment. Donald unfolded

to Harry his plans which required a lieutenant with legal knowledge adequately to carry out, and insisted that a migration to Islington would be the best possible step for all concerned. He made an offer that Harry could not afford to decline. Mrs. Lee and Kathleen were beside themselves with delight when Harry provisionally accepted it.

"I'll have my Eleanor back," said Kathleen dancing around the room like a child whose cup was full. In the end Dick Deland went home, Mrs. Lee and Kathleen followed, and Eleanor and her husband set out for a trip with Donald and Mattie Waugh.

Max Pomfret and his mother, who had not been outside of Virginia since she was a girl, took train and boat to Islington, where Mrs. Pomfret stayed awhile with her boy, until the fragrance of rose-leaves came back to the home whence Miss Clemmie and Miss Dora at last banished the odor of a pipe. The house cleaning they did would have satisfied a housekeeper with a New England conscience.

To reconcile the old Max and the new was a task beyond the sisters. Mr. Waugh, who knew nothing of the man's past, trusted and liked him as an inventor and a man with ideas, a man to cultivate and keep at hand. The truth was that so far as remorse and regret could atone, he had paid the debt of his young manhood, but not until he felt sure that those who knew him then had passed away, could he bring himself to step again in the streets of his old home. And since his youth, he had undergone a good deal of positive suffering, in the years of the war, when fighting for the lost cause. The peculiar thing that kept Eleanor from so much as admitting Max Pomfret

then or ever to her liking was that he seemed so delivered from comprehension, that he took so slight account of what his mother had endured of anguish and suspense. To his mind this suffering of hers was apparently not existent. A few facile words of penitence and he was satisfied that all was right, yet the mother kept loving, trusting, almost adoring him still. Max was an odd compound of sagacity and stolidity, and Eleanor did not care for him.

Before the house party broke up, one summer morning when strawberries were ripe, she was walking by herself on a country road. Acres of strawberries filled the air with lush sweetness. Hundreds of pickers bent to their task, filling the boxes and crates that were going to the Northern markets. Overhead the skies were blue with the ineffable depth of June, when "heaven tries the earth if it be in tune, and softly above it her warm ear lays."

She walked on alone. She had felt a craving to go off in solitude, away from every one, to think whether or not she could willingly forsake this Southern home that had grown so dear. She was not quite sure that it was wise or best. Musing she sauntered on. She was inaudibly lifting a prayer that there might be no mistake.

Behind her, soundless on the sandy road, came a phaeton drawn by a pony, a lady driving. She called to Eleanor, as she passed, then stopped.

"Have you heard," she said, "that Charles Dickens is dead?"

The brightness of the day was dimmed for Eleanor. The sky was opaque for a second or two. Dickens dead! The tidings brought an intense and thrilling

sense of personal bereavement. It saddened two continents and eclipsed the light of the English-speaking world, and Eleanor's stunned reception of it was repeated in ten thousand hearts.

For in that day every one quoted Dickens, his people moved and walked before one's eyes. Susan Nipper, Bella Wilfer, Mrs. Boffin, David Copperfield, Uriah Heep, and all the rest in his marvellous portrait gallery enriched the wealth of the world. Our talk was crisp with phrases which he had given us to be current coin wherever men and women met and conversed. His vogue has passed, but it was a good and pleasant vogue while it lasted, and his work will always belong to literature. Though out of fashion now, it will never cease to be a standard, and reading people must continue to love it.

Eleanor was glad she had heard the master read "Boots at the Holly Tree Inn" in New York, that she had once touched his hand in greeting, and she was sorry through and through that Dickens was dead. She went home saddened, for one who had been a great inspiration in her life had left the earth, and put on the garments of immortality. To divert her mood she began packing in earnest, and later went forth to find good homes for her colored people.

XVII

AN EVENING CALL

WHEN the Osbourns were, after an interval of some weeks spent in travelling, finally settled in Islington they found themselves in a North of new conditions and thriving activity. Islington, as Donald Waugh had predicted, having awokened from a long Rip Van Winkle sleep, had made immense progress, and was rapidly pushing out from a small village to a great city, streets running out in every direction, and mills and factories multiplying in the business district.

They went from the train to their own home. The furniture and books had been sent from the South on their departure, and it had been to Mrs. Lee and Kathleen a labor of love to arrange everything tastefully in the house Mr. Waugh had selected for their occupancy. This was not far from his own, in the newest and finest portion of the town, and no pains had been spared to fit it with whatever improvements then existed, and to make it convenient and charming. Max Pomfret worked like a Trojan in unpacking and arranging, proving himself most efficient, and his mother who was beginning to feel the pangs of homesickness, forgot them and consented to stay awhile longer, that she might see her friends in their new nest, before she returned to the South. Clemmie and Dora were writing appealing letters every

week, urging her return, and she was tugged at in two directions, disliking to leave Max, who did not need her, and yet seemed to, and longing at the same time to go to his sisters who confessed a very definite need.

Eleanor thought Mrs. Pomfret had failed. She looked older, shrunken, and tremulous, poor lady; the excitements of the past year had told upon her strength. Between seventy and eighty years, there is little margin left on which to draw.

In the first month or two, Eleanor was supremely contented. Old friends called. New acquaintances left cards. Everybody who had gone to school with her was glad to see her again, and her husband was included in her welcome. The atmosphere, stimulating and electric, was to her as a quickening breath. She was eager to throw herself into the current of affairs, to work among the mill people, to do good somewhere to somebody. Her mother observed that she was again the vivid, emphatic, earnest being she had known at nineteen. It was as if the Eleanor of the last decade had slipped away, and the former Eleanor had come back to her old place.

A Woman's Club was just forming amid much opposition and many good-humored jeers. In those days, people were very doubtful about women's clubs. The great work done by women in the Sanitary and Christian Commissions had developed them in administrative capacities, and shown them what they could do, in carrying forward large enterprises. To many a woman, fossilized by the routine of unbroken domesticity, the outside interests, into which her love of country and care for the soldier

had forced her, had proved a renovation and refreshment. Women were reluctant to sink again into the monotony of continual housekeeping, varied only by a little church work; they felt that they wanted something beyond the "common task," that hitherto had furnished "all they ought to ask." Of this recognized need and felt want, was born the Woman's Club, an important movement which has brightened and blessed the womanhood of America for at least one generation, and is at present steadily forging ahead to the upbuilding of home interests everywhere.

Eleanor threw her influence on the side of the club, and was one of the charter members of the "Fortnightly," which organization was to devote its energies to literature and music, with philanthropy as a side issue. Mrs. Lee held back, because she belonged to the old order, and was a natural conservative, and Kathleen would have nothing to do with the affair, for the excellent reason that Dick Deland made fun of it.

Eleanor was not indifferent to the attitude of her family, but she felt sure that time would change it. When, however, one evening, Mr. and Mrs. Waugh called, their criticism aroused her defiance.

"I am amazed," said Donald, addressing Harry, "that you permit your wife to make herself conspicuous in this absurd and mannish eccentricity of the advanced female. I think you should make a firm stand against it."

Harry, no more than any other husband, enjoyed this tone. He replied stiffly,

"Eleanor does as she chooses. I do not assume to control her actions or infringe her liberty."

Eleanor, with lips tightly closed and flushing cheek, was restrained from a hot reply, because in her own home, as a lady, she could be rude to nobody. But she was inwardly boiling over. Donald Waugh was Donald Waugh yet, as bigoted, domineering, narrow, and self-satisfied as ever. Mattie, observing danger signals, put in her tactful word.

"My husband really means that you ought to persuade Eleanor against drifting into a false position. At least, dear," she said, turning to Mrs. Osbourn, "you might be less in evidence. This 'Fortnightly Club' is in the experimental stage. If it is going to lead women to neglect their families, send husbands out to seek entertainment away from home, and generally work havoc in domestic relations, you don't want to take the initiative in such an enterprise."

Donald gazed on Mattie with admiration. Truculent himself to the last degree, he appreciated his wife most when she was most smoothly didactic. His big hands, which Eleanor at the moment remembered she had always abhorred, were complacently folded across his ample white waistcoat.

"Quite right, my dear," he said. "You have stated the case with the utmost lucidity. I am sure Eleanor will see that it is her duty to withdraw from the association."

"I was on the contrary," said Eleanor, "counting on Mattie to be a very useful member of the club. Had you not happened in to-night, I should have called on her to-morrow, expressly to give her an opportunity to join us. It is a pity that anything which is bound to be very influential in Islington, should lack the countenance of Mrs. Waugh."

"Even had Donald approved," said Mattie sweetly, "I could not have gained my own consent to enter anything so revolutionary. And, as he certainly would forbid it, if I wished it ever so much, you see, Eleanor, that you must not expect anything from me."

Mattie's air indicated that Donald's will was her law. Her sovereign beamed upon her benignly. Into his heart floated, like a strain of music, the whole of Solomon's description of the woman whose price is above rubies. "She will do him good and not evil, all the days of her life," he thought happily as he escorted his wife homeward; joyfully aware that he had escaped the lifelong grind it would have been, to have so volatile, headstrong and insufferably determined-on-her-own-way mate, as Eleanor Lee. When the Waugh house was closed for the night, Donald sought Mattie, who was in her dressing-room, sitting beside a handful of fire on the hearth.

"My darling," he said, "my pearl of discretion, how providential it is that I was the fortunate fellow to secure you, most loving, most obedient of women and wives. Are you ever sorry you married me, ever sorry you promised to obey?"

"Never, Donald, dearest," and the plump little comrade of his days looked smilingly into his face. She slipped her soft hand into his. The big fist closed over it, as if it had been a baby's. He gathered her into his arms, and sat blissfully content by the smouldering roseate ashes of a driftwood fire.

"Donald," said Mattie, "about refurnishing the drawing-room, if you still object, I will not press the matter. The present furniture is really very nice, and as you said, very serviceable and strong."

A week before they had discussed the matter with some vehemence. Though Donald was royally rich, he had a near streak, and it cropped up in unexpected places. Thus while in some directions, as the horses, the garden, the grounds, he was lavish, in others he was parsimonious, and Mattie had learned to trim her sails to meet and sometimes to evade the reefs and shoals of his caprice. In the matter of maid-servants, he was miserly, and though Mattie had begged for a butler, she had hitherto begged in vain.

His mood to-night was most indulgent. Smoothing the fair brown hair, gazing into the calm blue eyes that held no storms, observing the exquisite neatness of the home, where Mattie gave him such worshipful attendance, he wondered that he had ever denied her anything.

"My love," he said, "I am so gratified at the womanly good sense you have shown in the matter of this most opprobrious club, that I cannot praise you sufficiently. Furnish the drawing-room over, as soon as you please. I give you *carte blanche*. Of course I should not have held out against you at all, had I fancied you cared much about the thing. And, by the by, Loomis told me this morning that he can procure us an admirable English butler, so if you want him, you shall have him."

"Oh, Donald ! how good you are, how generous. Can we afford this ?"

He drew himself up offended for the instant.

"Afford it, my child ? What are you thinking of ? We can afford what we choose. I'll buy you those pearls you have been wanting so long, if you will

drive down town with me to-morrow. ‘Beauty should go beautifully,’ my love.”

Mattie smiled a little as she let down her long hair and brushed it before retiring. Her unspoken reflection was that a woman could do what she chose with her husband if only she understood him. She felt no little pride that she could wind this big, obstinate, raw-boned Donald of hers around her little finger. As for the Woman’s Club, what did she care for it? To meet her townswomen twice a month, to write papers on subjects that implied hard work and research, to study parliamentary law, and conduct debates, all these seemed to mean superfluous toil to Mattie Waugh, who was easy going, ordinary, and honestly affectionate and fond of her home and husband. Donald enjoyed being obeyed. She enjoyed obeying him when his mind and hers were on the same tack. When she differed with him she bided her time, and brought him around to her way of thinking, and he never suspected the process. How stubbornly he had scoffed at her desire for a correct butler, and yet here he was installing one. Mattie was entirely willing that he should assume the glory of having introduced this new element into their housekeeping, few families in Islington, as yet possessing a man-servant, for indoor work.

She lay awake, a long time that night, her even pulses beating faster than their wont with triumph, and her last thought was of thankfulness that she had so good a husband.

“Dear Donald!” she whispered as she fell asleep.

In the Osbourn home after the Waughs left, Harry stretched himself as if tired out.

"Do you really suppose, Eleanor," he said, "that Donald Waugh represents the best sentiment of Islington?"

She flashed up in an instant.

"He represents his egotistical, pragmatical, intolerant self, and Mattie is his echo. It makes me ill to see a woman so subservient. Harry Osbourn, do you think me an idiot?"

"I have never had the remotest idea that you were anything other than an eminently level-headed gentlewoman," he answered.

"Because," Eleanor hesitated and blushed, looking lovely in her gown of rose-red, with her head held high, "I am not going to take any step that you, after deliberation, honestly will tell me, you regard as compromising. We are newcomers here, in a sense, and you have your career before you. I shall not do the least, *least* thing to hinder or hamper you. But I don't want you to speak just because you are a man, and therefore a natural wet blanket. I am a grown woman and not a child, but I am open to reason, Harry."

"Eleanor, do exactly as you think best, and I'll stand by you. My private opinion is that this whole fuss is a tempest in a teapot. Why shouldn't you women have a club if you want one?"

Eleanor turned away. Her husband was behaving just as she wished him to, yet the note of indulgence annoyed her. The truth was that the word club was a real stumbling-block when women first began to form themselves into that organization. Society, association, any other term had its accepted meaning. Club bore with it an undefined notion that women

meant to cope with men, that they were rebellious against domesticity and tired of home and home's duties. As it turned out, the club proved the home's ally, and brought into women's lives an element of positive interest and a desire for intellectual development that for the ordinary home-keeping woman were beyond price. The "Fortnightly" in time was as honored by husbands as beloved by wives, but it took time to bring that result.

XVIII

A TINY CLOUD

MATTIE WAUGH and Eleanor Osbourn were inseparable friends, notwithstanding their differences about such subjects as the Fortnightly Club, and when a year after the Osbourns' return there was a little daughter in the Waugh nursery, Eleanor readily agreed to become the child's godmother.

"Though to tell the truth, Mattie, you might easily find a better person than I," she said modestly.

"Both my husband and I choose you," was the reply, and Eleanor taking her duties seriously began to think what she should do, when Lois Waugh should be old enough to go to Sunday-school; how she should help the parents in training their little one for heaven.

In the fullness of his pride and joy, Donald laughed at her, when nobody but Mattie was by. He felt quite equal to the task of training a dozen children and supervising their religious education, but if Mattie wanted godfathers and godmothers, he was ready to oblige her. Indeed it was very seldom that Mattie Waugh did not direct her life, and control her husband according to her own notions of what was most desirable.

"Thinking of Lois," observed Eleanor, when the baby was a few weeks old, "I have decided to start a Bible class."

" You have ? "

" Yes, Harry; down in Old Field Hollow, at the mills."

" You cannot go there alone! I'm sure you ought not even to think of it."

" Why not ? " Eleanor was astonished.

" Neighborhood's too rough, there are too many dangerous characters prowling around. I shouldn't dare to let you try it."

" But Harry, you might come too."

At this Harry hesitated. A Christian man, he had a strange aversion to teaching or speaking, or in any way putting himself in the foreground. Eleanor struggled hard to win him from what she thought was morbidness, and, her idea developing in the course of a week or two, she proposed that he should start a series of meetings for young men, in the Hollow, letting them follow her afternoon class. Harry had not suffered her to go without his escort or that of Max Pomfret, on any of her visits, though she was a good deal annoyed and declared she preferred to go alone.

" You see, Harry," she explained, " when you walk there with me, and stroll about without an object, every man, woman and child who sees you, is perfectly aware why you come. They know as well as if I wore a label that you think I'm too precious to be left where I may meet a drunken man."

Instantly that she had said it, she had the shamed perception of the woman who has blundered into saying the wrong thing, and to cover her error she went on talking very fast indeed. By a tacit understanding no allusion was ever made by either of them

to the bygone period of Harry's lapses from sobriety. That was a closed chapter. Eleanor rattled on, and hoped that she had safely diverted the talk into another channel, when her husband interrupted her.

"I beg your pardon, Eleanor. Just now you did say a very true thing. I don't want you thrown into contact with those poor fellows down there. Sundays they are worse than other days, for they have spent Saturday's earnings or part of them in the saloons, veritable hell's kitchens, some of them, and there's a feeling that is not very kind abroad in that quarter. You may win the children as much as you please. You may go there clothed in your plainest gown. The unrest in the air is like malaria. They know me for Donald Waugh's attorney, and you for Mrs. Donald Waugh's friend. Your elegant home is on the Hill near that of the Waughs'. At the moment the Waughs are not loved, and a drunken man might do you a mischief. I would rather you hadn't taken up the Sunday-school idea at this particular crisis. Since you have, I must protect you. It is my right."

"I don't understand," Eleanor's face was puzzled. "The whole support of the Hollow people comes from the work they get in the mills and Donald is a just employer."

"Surely he is, but he lives in luxury, and they in thriftlessness and want, and they make comparisons. A strike is imminent, and the mills may shut down. If they do, there will be suffering. Donald won't yield an inch to the demands that will soon be made on him."

"Harry, you know as well as I, that there would not be such anguish of poverty if the men were tem-

perate. Why won't you try to help them? I am so very sure you could, and sure you ought."

"Once for all, Eleanor, because humility becomes me. A reformed man ought to take a back seat. And you can't know what I *ought* to do!"

He left her abruptly, went to his den up-stairs and shut the door. They did not meet for some hours, and the subject was not resumed.

Meanwhile Eleanor who was not to be easily turned when she had set her head in any given path, went continually to the Hollow, not on Sundays only, but repeatedly on one or another errand on week days. To the latter, Harry made no objection. The men were then at work, the streets deserted, and she might minister comfort and counsel, if she wished, to the women and children.

Curiously, the women refused her advances, and she was piqued. Never before had her father's daughter found people insensible to her personal charm. She asked her mother what the reason could possibly be, going to Mrs. Lee with the bewilderment of a baffled child.

"They act as if I had no right to step into their homes, mother."

"What right have you, dear?"

"Why, I don't know. My object is to help them, to show them how to keep house and mend their clothes, and bring up their boys and girls."

"But have they asked your assistance?"

"Why no. Only as I've started a Bible class, and am making some sacrifices for those people, I have a sort of privilege."

"Now, Eleanor, you began that class for your own

pleasure, to satisfy your own desire to be up and doing. To those who have entered it you have a duty, but to the rest of the Old Field Hollow folk, your intrusion in their home life savors of some impertinence. Would you enjoy having a stranger call on you, and straightway put through some such catechism as this:

“Good-morning, what a bright day this is. Has your husband work? Does he bring home his wages? Have you any children who can help you? Why do you not burn your cinders? It is very wasteful to throw them away. I think your front yard is not very tidy. Will you plant flower-seeds if I give you some?” And so on. I submit to you, Eleanor, that a rich woman has no more right, uninvited and unannounced, to invade the home of a poor woman, than the latter would have, were she to undertake the opposite thing. I wonder they don’t sweep you out with their brooms!”

“Mother!”

“I mean it, Eleanor.”

“And you think me intrusive and officious?”

“Not with intention, but in reality.”

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend—and a mother; I’ll think this over,” said Eleanor, who in bravery of silk attire was on her way to a meeting of the “Fortnightly.”

She went down the steps and came back.

“Mother!” she called, and her eyes were full of tears.

“What, my daughter?” Mrs. Lee was troubled by the distress in her face. Eleanor was hurt by something and showed it.

"Have you noticed that Harry is not well lately; that he is not cheery, nor quick in the uptake, as the Scotch say? Is there anything you have noticed?"

"Dick Deland was speaking of Harry last evening. He fancies him overworked."

"There is something not quite right. I wish we had not left the South. The rush of the North is too much for Harry, I am afraid."

"Don't borrow trouble, Eleanor. A man may have a passing touch of malaria, or may be a little worn. I'm sure you should not worry."

There was some cause for anxiety if not for worry. Suddenly without evident reason, a dam may give way, weakened by a break that has been unsuspected. Harry Osbourn was not a physically strong man. His past had told upon him, both its hardships and its excesses, and forced into a field of relentless work, under great pressure, where the rewards were large, but the efforts also incessant, he was not quite able to bear the strain. He grew irritable and depressed. There came over him at times an impulse to drop everything. He was losing his grip.

As in a flash light Eleanor saw it all, she even read between the lines, some of the temptations he did not put into speech. Half beside himself, without a valid reason for being so, Harry Osbourn was meditating flight. Absolutely without motive, except the desire to run away. Could it be held in abeyance from without?

It was Max Pomfret who put Eleanor on her guard. He was walking home with her from her class one Sunday.

"I venture a good deal, Mrs. Osbourn," he said,

abruptly, "but you've got to watch Harry. He's not normal at present, don't you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, dear lady, I mean only that Harry is giving way. If I were you, I'd just let somebody else look after these kids awhile, and I'd look after my man at home."

"Thank you," said Eleanor at last, after they had walked a block in silence.

"Is there any reason you know of, why Harry can't hold his own? Is Mr. Waugh driving him too hard?" She always had a suspicion ready there.

"None in the world. But, madam, the man's tired out."

They went on. Mrs. Osbourn asked Max in, but he declined. He would come after supper as usual on Sunday evening and they would sing.

XIX

DO DUTIES CONFLICT?

THE Sunday night supper was always a very pleasant time in Eleanor's home. Her mother and sister came in, and plates were laid for guests who might happen to call; a man away from home, or a young girl in business all the week, and living in a boarding-house. That the extra work might not burden the maids, almost everything for the meal was prepared on Saturday, and the ladies themselves set the table and afterwards washed the dishes and put them away. A knack with the chafing dish enabled Eleanor to add a hot dish to the menu, and this bit of home cooking and home comfort with a loving home welcome gave many a young woman or man, far from father and mother, a real lift on the road. In a manufacturing town, opportunities for this sort of service abound, and it requires only the gentle thought so to extend a cup of cold water to one of Christ's little ones. Mrs. Pomfret's silver hair and birdlike daintiness were an attraction when she was with Max, for nothing is lovelier than a lovely old gentlewoman, both for the grace she confers and from an artistic view-point. A house that never has known a grandmother's presence has missed a benediction. Max was never absent. He lounged and loafed, and was somewhat reminiscent of pipes and smoke, yet nevertheless he talked

well on occasion, and could be an agreeable companion. Men liked Max; men as dissimilar as Donald Waugh and Harry Osbourn found pleasure in chatting with him, and in his various vicissitudes he had picked up odds and ends of information and a knowledge of human nature that made him interesting.

"He, if anybody, ought to take a back seat," reflected Eleanor whimsically, "but it is the last thing he thinks of doing. Notwithstanding all the trouble and anxiety Max Pomfret's past conduct has cost, he goes serenely on, without remorse or regret, so far as one can see, just living in the present hour, while my Harry has not shaken off the weird of the evil spirit that held him so long. Harry is the morbid one, not Max."

It had come to her in a glimpse of revelation that she was leaving Harry to brood, while gradually the new engagements that filled her time, were taking her a good deal from home. She could not honestly blame the Fortnightly Club for this. Its hour of meeting conflicted with no hour of leisure for Harry, and the time it required her to spend in study was time spent at home. But whatever caused it, she could not evade the conclusion, that she was becoming a preoccupied woman, a woman with so many and such peremptory calls upon her mind, that she could give her husband only a half-hearted attention much of the time.

"Mother," she said as she helped Mrs. Lee off with her wraps in her pretty room up-stairs, "tell me, do duties clash? Am I growing into a person who is pulled in two ways? Have I ceased to be restful?"

Mrs. Lee laughed.

"My precious, you have never been precisely restful. Vehement, breezy, stimulating, are the adjectives I would apply to you. But why this catechism?"

"Max has made me uneasy about Harry."

Mrs. Lee's face expressed concern.

"Yes? Harry is not looking well. I've noticed that."

"What can I do?"

"Nothing now, except to watch for the right leading, or rather, let yourself be led. I would spend my Sundays with him for awhile, I think, and hand over that class so nicely organized now to somebody else. Kathleen and Dick, and some of their friends might try it."

"Do you think they would? Dick makes so much fun of my philanthropies and so does Kathleen."

"I know. Still I am of the opinion that, to relieve you, they wouldn't shrink from this special task. Our reading and talks lately have been on suggestive lines, and we, at home, have been finding out that we are much too lazy and self-indulgent, so I am very hopeful that you may pass this bit of work on to your sister."

"Mother, when in the world are those two going to be married?"

"Don't ask me, child. I am thankful for every hour that I can keep Kathleen with me, and Dick has some home claims that he cannot cast off."

"A long engagement is most undesirable. Mother, don't you agree with me, that something should be done to hasten the wedding day?"

"Indeed no, dear child, I do not. In this as in most cases, I have learned to wait the Lord's leading. Dick and Kathleen are both young, and the present is a happy time for them. I won't try to hurry Providence."

They found the drawing-room filled with a cheerful group of people. Harry had brightened up, and was as entertaining as usual. Eleanor slipped her hand into his as she passed him, and gave him a look of love that was as heartening as a caress, and his glance was swiftly responsive. Later she saw with new comprehension, the droop of his figure as he sat a little apart when they were singing after supper, and the absent far away look of his eyes. Clearly, Harry Osbourn was not well.

Kathleen played and they sang dearly loved anthems and chorals, and then, settling down in a circle, they had a half hour's reading before they separated. Sunday evening services were not common in Islington. People went to church morning and afternoon, and by a little after ten at night, in those simple days, the silent curfew had given its signal and everybody was at home and in bed.

That night, as they were undressing, Eleanor turned abruptly to Harry and said, "What ails you, dear? You are somehow not yourself."

"There's nothing the matter that I know of Nellie. I'm, maybe, restless."

"There's a good deal the matter, Harry. You can't deceive your wife. Why don't I know you, dear, through and through, every thought before you speak it? If you are not well, or are troubled, why not confide in me? Can you not trust my affection?"

"My dear wife, I have nothing to confide. I can't stand the pace here, somehow, that's all."

Eleanor sat down. Her hair was around her shoulders like a rippling veil; her dressing gown open a little at the throat, showed her white neck, the loose sleeves fell from her rounded arms. Her husband, standing opposite her, thought he had never seen a fairer vision. She looked up into his face, her eyes tenderly compelling.

"We've gone through a good deal together, you and I," she said. "I can bear anything, Harry. But if there is anything wrong I want to know it."

"There's nothing, my darling, except what I tell you. This husband of yours is a failure. I can't stand the pace. I'm not a big enough man to undertake the work Donald Waugh cuts out for me, and I can't make money enough to live and meet the expenses we are having here. I tell you this, Eleanor, with shame. Why you of all women, should be married to a man inadequate to the occasion, and have to carry him for your lifelong burden, I can't see. Lately I've been rather hoping that I might not last very long. Then, you'd be free."

Eleanor's cheek had taken on a red stain glowing as the heart of a jacqueminot rose. It was in her a sign of deep emotion.

"As if your dying and leaving me would do anything except break my heart," she said. "Oh! Harry, what a foolish dear fellow you are. Of course Donald makes you work too hard. I might have expected that, but he's a just man, and cannot go on exacting the impossible. The whole of the matter is that you've been losing cases instead of

gaining them, and you are losing faith in yourself, and maybe you need a change of some sort. If we are spending too much, why, we'll spend less. Why didn't you speak sooner, my darling? Now, cheer up, everything will come out right."

"And you don't despise me?" he said. "You love, notwithstanding everything?" It was almost the same question Donald had a few weeks before asked Mattie. Strange that love demands so many declarations.

"Love you, of course I love you, Harry."

"And all this feverish rushing here and there, and working in the highways and the byways, and doing good by wholesale, all this hasn't stolen away your heart from me, has it, my dear?"

"Certainly not." Eleanor felt vexed. It was so unreasonable. To have her lofty mood intruded upon by this note that seemed to her petty and utterly needless was a distinct jar. It is not always easy for a man and a woman to understand each other, even though they are wife and husband and have spent years in the ceaseless comradeship of life's most intimate relation. Eleanor was quick-tempered, and a retort was on her tongue, but she checked it, and spoke pleasantly. She needed self-restraint now if ever.

"I'm afraid I've been gadding about too much, Harry, but I'll be your stay-at-home wife hereafter. You look tired, dear; don't let us talk any more to-night."

As had been their recent custom they had good-night prayers together. Eleanor sat beside the shaded lamp and read a psalm, and they knelt and

asked help from One who never is asked in vain.
But they talked long before they went to sleep.

Next morning when she was sealing the last of her letters, and gratefully felt that her correspondence for the day was off her hands, Eleanor had a caller. Donald Waugh was announced and with the freedom of the friend of the family walked into her morning room.

"Mattie tells me," he said, "that you and she have a plan on foot for getting up a model restaurant and reading-room at the mills, for the young women. Improvement, I understand from her, of their physical health, and their intellects, such as they have, is the aim you have in view. The idea strikes me as feasible, and, unless you run away into wastefulness and mere show, I'll stand back of you with cash. I am fully aware, Mrs. Osbourn, that the idea did not originate with my wife and therefore I take it, she is simply following you."

His shrewd eyes gleamed and then softened. His knowledge of Eleanor was not the superficial judgment of a new acquaintance. He thought he gauged her very accurately, and, the softness passing from his look, he proceeded sententiously.

"I can talk to you freely without giving offense. I'm not going to have my work-people spoiled by fads, or by pity. They do their work under fairly good conditions in a fairly good environment, and they are well paid. Never in my life have I been tolerant of sentiment, as sentiment. But I'm willing to try this experiment, within reason, and to back you and Mattie, as Mattie has set her heart on the thing. I'm putting it ungraciously, I'm afraid. I've had that

misfortune all my life when I've talked with you, Nellie."

The childish diminutive slipped out before he knew it. The man was of granite, but there were rifts in the rock. He would never get over the habit of friendliness when he talked with the woman he had petted in her babyhood.

" You are just exactly as you always are, Donald," said Eleanor, " the best hearted old bear in the world. If you had come to me Saturday and said all this, I would have been the happiest creature in Islington. As it is, I'm afraid I can't avail myself of your goodness, and I fear Mattie must look for somebody else to help her; I'm sure I'll not have the time."

Donald looked amazed.

" Mattie will do nothing without you, Eleanor. You would be right hand, right eye, right foot in such an undertaking. She hates initiative as much as you love it. Besides, she has the baby, and her time is very full."

Again his rugged face softened. Fatherhood transfigured it. When Donald held his child in his arms, he was another man from the mill-owner who trod the streets like an autocrat; from the severe looking deacon who passed the plate on Sunday like an austere saint of the middle ages. As he now spoke of the baby, a smile like sunshine lit the square-hewn countenance. He rubbed his large capable hands together. How proud he was of that baby at home! Dear little Lois!

" Whence this sudden change of intention?"

A little mockery, was it possible, stole into his tone.

"Can it be that you are taking the sensible view, that you perceive that the discontent of the working class should be discounted by sensible people, that you are ready to acknowledge yourself mistaken in some of the compassion you have been expending?"

"Oh, for pity's sake, Donald Waugh, be still," exclaimed Eleanor, blazing up in an instant. "I am far on the road to socialism all through you! Your work-people have wretched unsanitary homes. Their work is monotonous and maddening. Your factories are ill-ventilated and dirty. When I see the train of women and girls, pale, sallow, hollow-eyed, round shouldered, and tired to death, that files out of your mills every night at half past five, I'm beside myself with sympathy. Want to help them, do I? Yes, with my whole heart, and with both hands. But this isn't a task to be thrown on Mattie and me. She has her baby, I have my husband. Donald, do it yourself, if you are convinced it should be done. Build a reading room and start a restaurant, and engineer it all, as only you can. Get Miss Rachel to take hold. She has a head. I've got my work cut out at home. Something's amiss with Harry."

Donald rose, and held out his hand.

"Eleanor," he said, "if anybody but you dared to talk to me as you do, I'd resent it. I'd resent it fiercely. But you are privileged. I'll think over what you've said. You are on the right road if you mean to devote yourself to Osbourn. He's *not* all right, but, for the life of me, I can't make out why. Here, too, remember, if you need a friend, you and he may always count on me."

He bowed himself out. There were worse men

in the earth than this same grim, granite-natured Donald Waugh.

Eleanor sat a good while thinking over the interview. She took down finally, at random, a little book from the shelf of her desk, and opened it to this passage.

"One evening when Luther saw a little bird perched on a tree, to roost there for the night, he said, 'This little bird has had its supper, and now it is getting ready to go to sleep here, quite secure and content, never troubling itself what its food will be, or where its lodging on the morrow. Like David, it abides under the shadow of the Almighty. It sits on its little twig content and lets God take care.'"

The little incident that had comforted the great Martin Luther, had its lesson of consolation for the woman who found it when she was not seeking a message. She put on her hat and went out into God's bright morning and the fresh sweet air.

XX

DONALD INTERFERES

WHEN Donald left Eleanor and walked towards the mills, his mind was an arena of opposite contentions. Eleanor's plain-speaking somewhat amused him. He certainly could not be expected to change his point of view, the view-point of a lifetime, at the hot words of a woman, who was nothing, if not tempestuous. Donald knew far more than she did about the seething undercurrents of agitation among factory operatives all over the land. The mutterings of a coming storm were even now heard in various quarters, strikes were threatening here and there; the figure of the obnoxious, half-educated and turbulent orator, who is invariably ready to feed the flame of a smouldering dissatisfaction with fiery arguments, was looming up in the near distance. Saloons were rapidly multiplying. Donald passed them on every corner, for alas! with the growth of Islington in beauty and luxury, keeping step with that growth, had come another of rampant vice and temptation. The saloon was a menace to the peace and purity of the town, and its twin, the gambling-den was lurking in the shadows. Donald was disposed to deny nearly every count of Eleanor's indictment. Nevertheless, something deep down in his soul, the strong, straight element in the man that made for righteousness was

on her side. Likewise, he thrilled with a feeling of pity for her, she seemed so fitted by her charm and grace, and the rare qualities of a rich nature for a life of social leadership, of ease and happiness, that one wondered why she had not achieved it. Instead, she was still to be, Donald felt, a being, storm-tossed and blown about by winds of an unknown fate, a driven leaf. Donald realized, as he seldom had, the puzzle of the world.

On the whole, he was rather pleased to carry out the undertaking himself in his own way without feminine flutterings, balancings and continual changes of adjustment. He sent for an architect and ordered plans drawn out in accordance with instructions very clearly given. This, too, before he left his office for home that afternoon.

He was a good deal disturbed about Harry Osbourn. The man was breaking in some subtle way, and it was too soon for him to break. Yet there was nothing on which to set a definite finger. A little erratic, a little unable to hold to the point, at times moody, at other times irritable, again surpassingly clever, never anything but courteous, Osbourn was an enigma to him. The soul of honor, Donald felt him to be, and with all who knew Harry, deemed him above suspicion, yet there were times when he had a certain furtiveness, as of one who had something to conceal. Donald shook his big shoulders with impatience, as he thought of it, and repeated almost what Harry himself had said, repeated it aloud in the privacy of his own inner office, "The pace is too swift for him, I ought to have left him in the South."

Meanwhile the tide suddenly turned in Harry's

favor, and he won two or three cases, just as he had lost two or three. These were before a jury, and in pleading with a jury to listen, he was at his best. At home Eleanor quietly reconstructed the domestic cabinet, cutting down her force of servants, and instituting a new economy. She was unobtrusively at hand when her husband needed her, walking with him in the morning, meeting him at night and coaxing him to take little roundabout trips with her on their way home. Islington no longer had stages as of old, when an omnibus accommodating twelve passengers, was its only public conveyance, except a hired coach, and people who did not keep horses did a great deal of walking, to the advantage of health and neighborliness. When one walks to and fro, one also runs in upon a friend for a cup of tea and a half hour's chat. Islington had accepted the innovation of the horse car, and many short rides and little jaunts were made practicable at small expense. Eleanor and Harry took the horse cars on every pretext, to the amusement of Dick and Kathleen and the annoyance of Mrs. Lee, who thought the new order of things much too democratic. What would they have said to cable cars and trolleys? Months passed by quietly and without incident in the home chronicles, until there dawned a very bright day for Eleanor Osbourn. Once more the Angel of Life crossed her threshold, and this time the son who was laid in her arms, a strong sturdy boy, came to stay.

Is there any joy like it, the joy that floods a household when God sends it a little child? When God would show forth His great love to a weary and sinful and suffering world, He sent forth His only be-

gotten Son, a babe cradled in a mother's arms, and laid to sleep in a manger. But heaven was all astir with the gladness of it and the greatness of the gift, and the angels in a flaming host, leaned down the midnight sky to strike their harps and sing, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men." In a less degree, a fainter measure, there is joy whenever any little one comes "trailing clouds of glory," to bless an earthly home.

The rich man counteth his cares
 By the shining gowd in's hand,
By's ships that sail on the sea,
 By's harvests that whiten the land.
The puir man counteth his blessings
 By the ring o' voices sweet,
By the hope that glints in bairnies' een,
 By the sound o' bairnies' feet.

An' it's welcome hame, my darlin',
 Hame to mither and me !
An' it's never may ye find less o' luv,
 Than the luv ye brought wi' ye !
Cauld are the blasts o' the wild wind,
 An' rough the warld may be,
But warm is the hame o' the wee one
 In the hearts o' mither an' me.

"One discovers sentiment where one least expects it. One does not go prospecting for sentiment in the counting-room or the lawyer's office, yet in the pockets of men, both business and professional, one often finds a simple bit of homely verse like this, treasured up and folded away in the wallet among the bank bills and receipts.

Harry pulled himself together after the boy's arrival,

and a halcyon interval dawned for him and his. Meanwhile Donald was proceeding in his accustomed masterful fashion, and the new edifice for the comfort and improvement of women-operatives in the factory rose from foundation stone to roof.

In the very beginning of the enterprise Donald made a characteristic blunder. It was in choosing the site. As the whole of the Old Field Hollow was his property, he naturally considered himself within his rights in tearing down and building up wherever he pleased. Unfortunately the Hollow had been let alone so long that the shabby houses and reeking tenements there had grown familiar and dear to the occupants, who were bitterly and furiously angry when obliged to remove, because the owner had decided to tear down a certain rookery, and erect a new and fine building where it had been standing. Other and better houses offered these people shelter at reasonable rates, houses which might almost be styled models of convenience and hygiene, with laundry tubs and basins for running water and other pleasant features. They scorned such fine apartments and entered them under protest, proceeding to mar them by neglect. As Donald's beautiful brick building rose, story by story, the very girls for whom it was planned, surveyed it superciliously, while their fathers and mothers sullenly declared that the scheme was something meant to give the "old man" more money.

"If I were looking for gratitude, Mattie, I'd be disappointed," said Donald one day, "but I know the working-man and his class too well for that. They don't know the alphabet of gratitude."

"Don't be a pessimist, Donald," laughed Mattie. He lifted his little daughter to his shoulder, and let her touch the chandelier with her small rosy fingers.

"I am not a pessimist, Mattie," he answered. "I might be, but for my home."

"When the doors are opened, and the young people learn that the whole place is theirs, and not ours, you will see a different state of feeling in the Hollow."

"I hope so, Mattie. May God grant it."

After a pause he went on, "People call me a hard man. I have never known why. From my boyhood I've had to fight my way inch by inch, but I've tried to do the right thing, and I'm soft-hearted underneath; I really am."

"Nobody understands that better than I do," said his wife.

XXI

A HALL OF REST

FLOWERS in the windows, a grand piano, a dining-room with small tables, each provided with delicate napkins and cloth, and supplied with fine blue china, a big bright parlor, with divans, easy chairs and rockers, and in brief every home like equipment that could be thought of, were parts of the admirable and beautiful house which Donald called a Hall of Rest, and opened for his women operatives.

The lavatories alone were sumptuous, with bath-rooms where tiled floors and walls, and nickel-plated fittings surpassed anything ever before seen in the Hollow. There were in fact people there who had never seen a bath-room at all.

Mattie and Eleanor went through the spacious edifice, attending to its final furnishing, selecting books for its library and periodicals for its reading room, with a delight that knew no bounds. The place, as a place, was simply perfect, lacking nothing that taste or money could add to it, and Mattie enthusiastically entered into the plans for its opening. Here she made her first mistake.

"I think it would be a good idea," she said, "to have a reception for our friends, and the ministers of Islington, and the common council and everybody of

note, before we formally hand this over to the girls. If you approve, dear, I'll send out the invitations at once."

Donald approved, this step commanding itself to his judgment as an eminently appropriate thing. Every one responded, for there had been no little curiosity about this new departure of Mr. Waugh's as a practical philanthropist, and when the day appointed arrived, a stream of carriages blocked the way, and gaily dressed ladies thronged the Hollow for several hours of the afternoon. As the works closed for the day, and the long procession of stoop-shouldered, haggard, weary-eyed girls and women issued from the gates, on their way homeward, they encountered the prosperous, merry, laughing crowd who to them represented what they called "the quality." These people they thought were arrayed like the lilies of the fields because somebody else did their toiling and their spinning, the somebody else in their view being the laboring population, faring, worn and discouraged to its supper, snatching what pleasure it could find in the streets, and seeing much of its hard earned wages disappear every Saturday night, in the till of the saloon keeper.

"'All hof Rest hindeed!" cried a red-faced English-woman, known as "Gypsey Mary," "'All hof Rest! They's never 'ave hit, but for the sweat of our brows."

"Oh, mother," pleaded Mary's pretty young daughter, "you're not goin' to be against it, are you? There's so many nice things there, and I want to rock in the chairs, and take baths, in those big white tubs."

"Don't you worry, Betsey," the mother looked with tender pride on the slim girl whose blue eyes were so appealingly raised to hers. "Don't you worry, you get hall the good you can hout of this 'all, 'twon't last so long hany 'ow."

The hall was thrown open to the Hollow people with special ceremony, and a fine amateur concert was given to signalize its first evening. The young ladies of Islington, with a sweet faced matron at the head of each group, took on themselves the duty of presiding over the dining-room at the noon hour, and over the evenings, where clubs and classes were soon started and free lectures were announced. A competent cook and janitor were installed; no burdensome restrictions were laid upon the house or its visitors, and, to save their pride and prevent their feeling of being pauperized, a fee was required for entrance upon the classes, and every item on the bill of fare, from soups to pastry, was charged for at a nominal sum.

The girls came from curiosity at the outset, and reported at home what they had to eat, and how it was served. The mothers sniffed scornfully and alluded to airs, stating with emphasis that no such silly frills and upsetting fusses would ever be allowed in their houses, and the fathers, hard-working men, who might have known better, openly jeered, and talked of "the old man" as making his pile out of it somehow.

"It's us as pays for that 'ere place," declared John Thomas, a leader among the men, and a frequent disclaimer in the coteries that gathered in the back room of the corner grocery.

"Don't you be too grateful, Betsey," said Gypsey Mary, after she had taken a meal at the noon-hour, at one of the dainty tables.

"I've known Donald Waugh, boy an' man, since I was a slip of a lass myself. 'E hain't givin' some-thin' for nothin', now you bet!"

So the new enterprise born of a genuine desire to please and uplift, had to fight an atmosphere of suspicion and make its way in the face of a smouldering antagonism, that was often voiceless, but constantly hostile.

Until the sympathies of the employed and the employer are identical, until the masses comprehend the classes, until Christ's dear love proves the solvent for every earthly hate, this feeling of thunder in the air will not pass. We wrestle in our blundering and groping charity, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, unseen and malignant, and the world-rulers of the darkness unfolding us are potential and obstinate. Still must we cry in our weakness and defeat.

"Thou, who dost dwell alone,
Thou who dost know Thine own,
Thou, to whom all are known,
From the cradle to the grave,
From the world's temptation,
From tribulation,
From that fierce anguish
Wherein we languish,
From that torpor deep
Wherein we lie asleep,
Heavy as death, cold as the grave,
Save, oh! save !

“O where Thy voice doth come
Let all doubts be dumb,
Let all words be mild,
All strifes be reconciled,
All pains beguiled !
Light bring no blindness,
Love no unkindness,
Fear no undoing !
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh ! save.”

Eleanor read this poem of Matthew Arnold's one morning as she sat by her sleeping baby. So much reading she did by that child's little crib, so much the tiny life was teaching her! A child's development is very rapid in its earliest months and years, but the mother's unfolding is hardly less swift. Eleanor understood the mothers in Old Field Hollow, as she never could have done, had not her boy's tiny crumpled fist put the key to their hearts in her hand.

Donald and Mattie called one day before dinner. Harry Osbourn met them as he always did most genially, and urged them to stay. Eleanor seconded him cordially, though she felt bound to tell them they must take pot-luck, since it was her cook's afternoon out. They needed no urging, and when Max Pomfret lounged in, he too was invited to remain and they had a merry meal.

Dinner was half over when the three men at the table sprang up with a startled exclamation. Harry rushed to the window. A red glow lit up the sky.

“Fire!” he exclaimed. “Fire!” echoed Donald. “It must be at the mills.”

Just then the loud sonorous clang of the alarm bell

was heard, pealing, pealing, with the note of strenuous clamor that no other bell repeats. Without a word the men seized hats and coats and were off, on a dead run, in the direction of the nearest car. The cars were already blocked and they tore breathlessly on, only Donald panting and finally stopping, as he lost wind. He had been putting on the flesh of prosperity and time, and running was a bit too much for him. But he gained breath and hurried on.

Left alone Mattie Waugh and Eleanor looked at one another blankly. They were midway in the dinner, but if there was fire at the mills, they had no further appetite.

"Suppose we follow our husbands," was Eleanor's suggestion, and Mattie accepted it. They slipped on loose cloaks and tied hoods over their heads, and at once set out, at a quick pace. It was night by this time and the darkness swallowed them up.

"Nell!"

"What, dear?"

There were tears in Mattie's voice.

"If it's our Hall of Rest, that somebody's set on fire, my heart will break."

"Nonsense, Mattie. It's not the hall. But maybe the hall will have to be used in a way we didn't intend, if it's the poor people's own houses that are burning. It may not be one of the mills. Their homes are tinder-boxes."

"Well, we'll soon know," said Mattie, hurrying Eleanor on.

They were nearly at the Hollow. They heard the roar of the mill-stream as it broke over the dam, and the rhythmic throbbing of the engines, like a mighty

pulse, as great columns of water rose and fell in sheets over the red spears of the flame.

"That blaze is too light to be factory or hall," said Mattie. "The Hollow itself must be on fire. The wind is rising and blowing towards the town. You were right, Eleanor."

"Hello! What are you doing here?"

Max was swinging home with his long stride.

"You go back!" he said. "They've got the fire under control. Islington's safe for this time."

"Do you imagine we've come so far to turn round and go home? We are both going straight on to see what we can do. I am sure there are people whom we can assist. The women will need us."

Eleanor spoke very earnestly.

Max answered her with equal earnestness.

"Mrs. Osbourn, some of those people are besides themselves with rage. They are standing by their burning houses, and they are ready to do or say anything. They may insult you. It is no place for ladies."

"I am not afraid. I'd be enraged if I were they. I think if this is their mood they need somebody with woman's wit to cope with it. Come along, Mattie."

"Well, I'll go back. Can I leave a message for either of you at home?"

Both had messages to send to housekeeper or nurse, for they did not know how long they might be detained by this new call of duty.

"I ought perhaps to have mentioned," said Max, as he left, "that I was sent back to reassure you, and to tell you to stay where you were, by Mr. Waugh himself."

"Well," replied Mattie cheerfully, "you have delivered your message and obeyed your orders, so that your conscience is clear."

Pitiful indeed was the scene of desolation and dire confusion which met their eyes when they stood on the edge of the crowd, around the ruins, still red and smoking, of the homes of the Hollow. An indiscriminate mass of household stuff, pots, kettles, feather beds, old chairs, and tables, infants' cradles, and sewing machines, was heaped in the centre of one street, and women stood about it, wringing their hands in dumb misery. Women, rich and poor, cling to their things, and to see the wreck of furniture familiar by long usage, is always a bitter experience for them to bear. The wife of the millionaire and the queen in her palace feel about this, exactly as Mrs. O'Flaherty and Mrs. Mulhavey do, and the latter suffer as acutely as the former when a catastrophe engulfs their Lares and Penates.

Many of the things in question were expensive and had been bought little by little. Working people have pianos, for instance, and their sons and daughters play on them, sometimes very well, finding great joy in the practice of difficult compositions, sometimes, like their avenue brothers and sisters dashing into rag-time tunes. A smile crossed the grim countenance of Donald Waugh, as he saw, by the flame's dying glare, a slender wizen-faced lad, seat himself at the piano somebody had saved and after a little running ripple of melody, break in a clear tenor, into a rollicking song.

"We won't go home till morning."

The crowd, despairing, excited, wavering on the

verge of anger, had one of those sudden changes of mood that come to crowds, a change as complete as the veering of the wind from north to south. Everybody joined in the mirthful chorus, and men, women, and children laughed and sang. Everything was not gone. They still had hearts to sing. At the moment this ditty served them better than a hymn.

Eleanor's silvery soprano lent itself to the strain. Harry struck in with a tremendous bass. When the song ended, at his wife's request Harry lifted up his voice, a voice that carried far and clearly, and invited every one to come to the Hall of Rest.

Thither they trooped, the swarthy, grimy firemen, the husbands and wives, and the sleepy children, fathers holding the little ones in their arms, tired women dragging themselves along. As if by magic a supper was prepared and everybody sat down, Donald and Mattie, Eleanor and Harry sitting and breaking bread with the rest. As Donald asked a blessing on the meal, many a man unused to this acknowledgment and prayer, said a quiet amen, and when they ate together, one of the mistakes of the past was retrieved.

The common need, the common fatigue, the loaf and the cup shared, bind men in brotherhood.

The people, else without shelter, slept that night in the Hall, and Donald took piles of new blankets from a mill, to cover them from the cold. He went about simply, as man to man, as friend to friend and some who had been drifting from him, knew the old touch and thrill of fealty again. They would work for him with greater loyalty hereafter.

Gypsey Mary laid her black head down on the arm of a chair, and cried. Eleanor went to her and kneeling down, put her arms around the sobbing woman. A tempestuous creature always, she was soothed by the loving contact.

"Don't cry so, Mary," Eleanor pleaded. "Your little girl is safe, and asleep on the lounge yonder, as pretty as a picture. What ails you, dear? Do hush and tell me."

"I've lost mother's clock that I brought from England," wailed Mary.

"I don't wonder you cry," said Eleanor, "but dear heart, you've saved your lassie, so be comforted."

The gray dawn was trembling in the east, when the Hill people wended their steps homeward from the Hollow. They were tired but somehow they felt repaid for a little extra fatigue. In the next month or two they were to get at the hearts and lives of their neighbors in an intimate way hitherto undreamed of by either side.

XXII

SISTER RACHEL

THE years that had been full of excitement to the younger people had moved so tranquilly for Miss Rachel Waugh, that they had left slight marks upon her placid face or comfortably compact and ample figure. She had grown stouter, and squarer, but the touch of time had made her younger rather than older. Though tortures would not have wrung the admission from her lips, the relief she had insensibly known when she no longer had the responsibility of looking after her brother, in a material or spiritual way, had been immense, Donald being what plain people consider a "handful." Miss Rachel passed him on to his wife at just the right moment for her own peace.

Busy and practical to the last degree, the spinster had kept a watchful eye on the proceedings in Old Field Hollow and the management of the Hall of Rest. She was as energetic as of old, and had a good share of the family shrewdness, and it struck her that the Hall was being carried on with quite too much sentiment and under too many different advisers. Until the night of the fire, she refrained from interference, waiting till there should be a good opportunity for her to offer counsel. The morning after that event, she was early on the scene. In short skirt, and stout boots, with a trimly small bonnet and a rough cloth

jacket, she was a capable figure equipped for action, and as she stepped into the office and extended her hand, her brother grasped it gratefully. The habit of going to Rachel in emergencies had been overlaid by many later habits, but it was not dead, only dormant, and sprang to new life at once.

"Well, here's a pretty state of affairs!" exclaimed Miss Waugh. "Of course you have telegraphed for tents, as these families must be settled somehow, while you are building new cottages for them, or making some provision that can be permanent."

"I will send for tents at once," he said. "That's a good idea. How like you to think of it, Rachel!"

"A woman has to think of the easiest thing," remarked Rachel complacently. "I presume all the burnt-out ones are camping, and rampaging, over here in your beautiful Hall of Rest. Hall of fiddlesticks, I've called it all along, but there's no reason in having it ruined, now that you've got it, is there, brother?"

A broad smile lit up Donald's rugged face.

"Since there's nobody by, sister Rachel, I'll confess that I have thus far found that same Hall a somewhat expensive plaything, and have been gradually coming round to an intention of turning it into a storage warehouse. What do you think? Would not that be a good plan?"

"Wouldn't that be a little like running away from a field that was too hard for you? Old Field Hollow at that! No, Donald, don't give it up now you have it. I'll go over and take command while the place is in such confusion. What is wanted all the time is a head. More than ever just now when this terrible

thing has demoralized the poor women and disheartened their husbands. I'll see what can be done."

The stout, efficient gray-haired woman marched to the rescue not a moment too soon.

"Here comes Betsey Trotwood," cried Kathleen, clapping her hands. Eleanor and Mattie were equally jubilant. Behind her back, Miss Rachel Waugh was often spoken of as Betsey Trotwood, and if Dickens had ever met her, she might well have posed for that delightful character. She was as kind of heart, as imperious in action, as sensible, and as capable, as her English prototype.

Nobody could have described the process, but from the instant of Miss Rachel's arrival, the misery of the Hollow was alleviated. As when a household has been at odds, because there is no one to take control, and quiet is resumed when the mother comes home, so it was with the Hall of Rest, in a very little while after Miss Rachel seized the sceptre. Dinners for every one were prepared in the kitchen, yet the house that was seething and tumultuous, became calm and still. Half a dozen women were set to work at cleaning and scrubbing. The children were packed off to school. By nightfall, every small family among the shelterless, was ensconced in a tent, or several families were grouped in a larger one, and quiet reigned. Men and women obeyed Miss Waugh, some because of a loyalty that had grown with their growth: others because their neighbors did. Among the newer employees, those who had come from foreign lands, there was nothing of the feudal relation towards the Waughs, which the older people knew, and owned. But every one did what Rachel Waugh bade, and be-

fore many days there was the sound of axe and hammer in the Hollow, and the new buildings shot up with magical speed. Work was plenty: there appeared no cause for complaint, and Donald took three months for a trip to Europe, with Mattie and Lois. Meanwhile Miss Rachel moved bag and baggage into the Hall of Rest, and all by herself established a settlement.

From the hour that she took control, a more human sentiment entered the doors. She had no particular policy except that she was a notable house-keeper, and one before whom dirt and cobwebs fled. Her floors at home were speckless, and her table beautifully served, and she brought precisely the same immaculate purity into the Hall that pervaded her domains at home. The women came to her with their troubles, and she had time to hear every story, and homely wit to sort out the grains of wheat from the chaff, and make the tangled skeins smooth. One of the first things she did was to bid the women bring their mending to the Hall, so that they might have a sociable hour while doing it. As she very well knew, mending was not their custom. The poorer people are, as a rule the more they throw away. Miss Rachel, tramping around in her cheery matter-of-fact style, with her sharp eyes that saw without seeming to see, her downright positive common sense, and her good-humored candor, was a woman whom the Hollow understood.

When she saw Gipsey Mary tired out after a day at the loom, unwilling to sit down and poke her needle in and out of a pair of worn stockings by the light of a kerosene lamp, she did not wonder and comment.

"I'd hate it myself," she said. But she so influenced Donald, that when he returned from across the water she induced him to give his work-people a Saturday half holiday all the year round. This time in their hands, for their own, made the women eager to learn and do many housewifely things besides mending and darning, and Miss Rachel was a good teacher and leader. She claimed that they spent Sunday more quietly and that there was less rioting and drunkenness after the Saturday half-holiday was granted than before. Miss Rachel said little about the saloons, but she taught the Old Field wives to cook well and make good coffee, and the homes began to present counter attractions, while the young men were soon not averse to spending their evenings, with the girls, in the Hall of Rest.

"But sister Rachel," expostulated Mrs. Waugh, "you have hardly any educational work worth speaking of. No literature classes, no advanced English or mathematics, none of the accomplishments are taught that we hoped for, when we erected this place."

"Does not the restaurant pay its own expenses?" conclusively replied Miss Rachel.

"Indeed it does, and more."

"Are not the houses and the streets cleaner? Is not the health rate higher? Goodness, child, what do you want? I'm repenting in sackcloth over the years I might have been doing good here in the factories, but I never knew how. I'd repent in ashes too, if they were not so powdery and dusty."

"But you have so few rules. I've been looking for those I had printed for the conduct of the girls, and

hung up in the parlor. Donald thought so well of them."

"Well, Mattie, if you must know, I trudged up to the attic with those rules and stuck them in the darkest corner. All that I want is to have a clean place here for a pattern, a happy place for sunshine, a quiet place where tired girls may rest, a safe place where young people may do their courting, and a Christian place where we may all praise God. You see, dearie, I'm *living* here. You only stop in every little while."

"Bless your heart, sister Rachel. I believe you have discovered the secret of true charity."

"This isn't charity, Mattie. It's sisterhood."

XXIII

A FRIGHT

EVEN Miss Rachel's optimism was destined to be put to a very severe test before long. When everything was moving like clock-work, when causes of disturbance were eliminated and agitation had given way to apparent contentment, without any warning to speak of, the mill-hands went on strike.

The shrinkage in values, following a period of over-production, made necessary for the manufacturer's protection either a diminuation in the number of hours of labor, or a cut in wages. It was the inevitable swing of the pendulum which may be counted on in every commercial country, since commerce has its ebbs as well as its floods. Not all Miss Rachel's axioms, not all her good examples had sufficed to teach the working people economy. They were children in the kindergarten yet, for all knowledge of saving or desire to save, so when they were threatened with a small reduction of income, they were angry and appalled. Those who belonged to the ancient order of the wise virgins, and who appreciated the situation and had no grievances of their own, those who had the wisdom to prefer going on with their work, rather than to sit down in idleness, were overruled by their labor unions, and had no choice. They presented their alternative to

Donald Waugh, either a shorter day at the same rate of payment, or a uniform scale for all workers, the good and the poor alike, or else they would cease work altogether.

The result was that he shut down the mills.

Then ensued a time of dreary inaction, and at last of dumb suffering for every one concerned. One by one, the little comforts and luxuries disappeared from the little homes. The cabinet organ, the wife's plush coat and gold earrings, the pictures, the prized china and plated ware, went to the pawn-shop. The strike was wide-spread, and the relief funds of the organization were terribly taxed. Donald, incredulous at first that his men could treat him thus, then indignant to the point of a white heat of anger, stayed at home, petted Lois, and took to reading American history. Every day he rode or walked through the mill district, fearless of attack, though warned of danger. His bravery oftener than he knew was his shield, and when it was learned that he refused to call on police or soldiers for aid, the better element among the men patrolled the neighborhood of his mills, and unknown to him, watched over his house on the Hill in the dead of night. They might defy Donald and refuse to serve him, but meanwhile no miscreant should work harm to him or his.

Eventually the strike was peacefully ended, as strikes frequently are, in a compromise, the employer's interests little hurt, his chief loss a great inconvenience, and the employees, much the worse in pocket and peace of mind, for what they had gone through.

The only episode that threatened to become a

tragedy occurred the day that little Lois Waugh was lost.

With her big blue eyes, her crown of clustering curls, red as spun gold, and her downright childish assertiveness, the little maid had been in the habit of visiting the mills with her father whenever she chose. When the strike was announced, Mattie thought it wise to keep Lois at home, but Donald insisted that there was absolutely no danger to any of his family, and picking up his daughter took her in the buggy beside him whenever he liked and wherever he went.

One day when he stopped longer than usual inside the mill, Lois clambered down from her seat, and went off in search of her Aunt Rachel. Her little white frock and frilled sunbonnet were seen as she slid like a stray sunbeam down the street, but nobody saw her go into the Hall; in fact when her father called her, and sent people here and there to look for her, there was no Lois; the earth might have opened her mouth and hidden the child therein for all that could be found of the little one.

Donald was composed on the outside, but frantic within. A hundred nameless fears buzzed and hummed in his ear; a keen regret pierced him with a dart. Why had he exposed Lois to an instant's peril, in times when some irresponsible person might loiter around, or some venomous nature revenge himself on the baby's father by carrying her off or keeping her concealed? Visions of kidnappers floated through his brain. He sent messengers in every direction, and rushed to the hall to consult Miss Rachel. Coming down the steps he met Eleanor, Kathleen Lee and Max Pomfret.

"What on earth is the matter, Mr. Waugh?" exclaimed the last.

"Matter enough. I've lost Lois."

"She can't possibly be lost," said Eleanor. "She's probably playing in somebody's back yard. The children here are wild over Lois."

"Where did you leave her, Mr. Waugh?" inquired Kathleen.

"In the buggy."

"Could she scramble out?"

"With perfect ease."

"Did anybody see her?"

"I seed her," piped up a ragged little boy. "She's gone wid my sister, to play house down by the wiver. Amy's dot a house wight on the adge."

Donald and Max rushed across lots to the bank of the mill stream, and never had two gentlemen made better time. There, playing on the edge of the stream, her face beaming, her feet wet, her white frock soiled and tumbled, was Lois Waugh, perfectly happy, she and wee Amy Kirby, in an earthly Paradise, with a house made of stones and pebbles, sticks dressed up with rags for dolls, and bits of cracker of which to make a feast.

"Don't scold her, Mr. Waugh!" said Max. "The child's had a half hour of heaven. You pick her up, and I'll take charge of Amy Kirby."

"Amy," he asked, "does your mother know you play here? This is not a nice place for a little girl like you to play in. The big water might splash up and drag you in and drown you."

"Mammy doesn't care where I play, if I'se a dood dirl," answered Amy with conviction. Nor indeed

did hard working Mrs. Kirby, who was nursing her ninth child, give herself a particle of concern, though she was sorry that Mr. Waugh had been frightened.

"You never hadn't ought, Amy," she said, "to carry off a little girl like that to play with you."

"Why, mammy, she was awful nice," explained Amy.

Nothing had happened, but Donald left Lois at home for some days after, and she felt that she was in disgrace. The little thing pined, for she had been as her father's shadow. One morning he brought Amy Kirby home with him in the buggy, and Lois introduced her to such a company of dolls and to so much grandeur that Amy was bewildered. But when she was taken home, with a great doll in her arms, that could open and shut its eyes, and "do stunts, mammy, lots of stunts," she also had her hour of perfect bliss.

Rich or poor, children require little to make for them a beatific world. To them in their sweet freedom from care belongs, almost to them only here below, the real kingdom of heaven. Did not our blessed Lord tell us that this is their inheritance?

In later years, the conditions in the Waugh mills were made as agreeable as possible for the women operatives, and parents were not able to evade the legal enactments against child labor. The poor often swear falsely as to the age of a child, moved thereto by their own desire for the child's earnings, and by the pleadings of the child's self. The little girl of twelve or thirteen sees her sister bring home a weekly wage, and envies her. The mother glibly swears, and carries the false oath lightly on an untrained con-

science. But the young girls need every instant of their hurrying childhood for growth and health, and in the Waugh mills their welfare in this and other regards was carefully conserved. The labor of the loom cannot be greatly softened. Long standing on the feet, alert vigilance, and toil in the incessant din of machinery are inevitable. But the father of little Lois did what he could to brighten the lives of his work people, and especially of the women and girls.

XXIV

FRIENDS TOGETHER

THE burdens of many hearts and homes were laid on the big heart of Rachel Waugh in these troubled times. Everybody came to her for counsel or for sympathy, or simply for the relief of telling a grievance. She was the escape valve which saved a good deal of excitement from doing permanent damage. Her old friends hardly knew her as she threw herself into the tide of affairs at Old Field Hollow.

"Betsey Trotwood, you are a trump," her brother said, patting her substantial shoulder.

"I can't wait for your honeyed flattery, Donald," she answered. "I've too many of your people to look after. It's something though that you don't think I'm doing more harm than good. I'm running a club here in opposition to the saloon, and, have you noticed, or haven't you, that at least one of those infernal places has shut up its doors?"

"I have noticed it, Rachel, and I rejoice. This work of yours here has not been done in vain."

"You see, Donald, it's not the drink only that leads men to the saloon. It's the good-fellowship, the sociability, the warmth, the light. The churches are beginning to discover that men have bodies as well as souls to be saved, and that is one of the principles we are working on here, in our little way. Come in

now and then, brother, man to man, and be friends with us, and you'll see what good it will do."

"Man to man?" He laughed as if she had made a slip. She laughed too, but she did not correct her error. She had meant what she said. Now she had to leave him for another who wanted her.

It was no less a person than the Englishwoman named familiarly Gypsey Mary. Her face was dark, and she waited for Miss Rachel, with an air of hesitancy, odd in one so assertive. In the Hollow she was a leader, a woman always in great demand. She was one of those characters, who, born to the purple, would have managed large affairs with accuracy and dispatch, and knowing how to choose her helpers and lieutenants, would have enjoyed planning and projecting, and have reaped the advantage of others' labor. Born with the horn and not the silver spoon in her mouth, used to poverty and hard work all her days, she was still a woman of resource, and her one soft spot, her love for her daughter, was never more in evidence than when the mills shut down and she had to find something to do at once.

"Why is it that you have nothing saved?" inquired Miss Rachel, when Mary came to her with an inquiry and a request.

"Look what I have done for Pet," she replied, a comprehensive wave of her hand towards the slim girl who was bending over a book in the library of the hall, showing whom she meant. Gypsey Mary seldom spoke of her one child by any other name than this tender epithet of Pet, and gradually the name had become common property. The young girl was very pretty, very gentle-mannered and lov-

able, a sweet clinging child, and everybody called her Pet.

Pet was dressed in a simple, well-fitting gown of dark blue worsted, with white at her neck and wrists. The ribbon she wore frilled at her throat was an exact reproduction of those Mrs. Waugh and Mrs. Osbourn and the ladies who came to the Rest Hall, wore just then. It even had a delicate edging of lace, as had the ruffles in her sleeves. She was as dainty and delicate in her attire as any girl could possibly be. Her hands were white, her fingers tapering, her air that of a young woman who was well cared for and who had a life of ease.

"Pet does not work in the mills at any time," said Miss Rachel. "What are you expecting to make of her, Mary?"

"Oh, she's young yet," said the mother. "She may learn fine sewing if she likes and be a dress-maker, or maybe she will get a place in the schools. Pet's very quick at learning."

"Mrs. Waugh might find her something to do in her home, now that you are laid off and in such need of money. Pet would soon acquire the accomplishments needed by a lady's maid, and she would then be sure of good wages, good food, and a safe home. I know that Mrs. Waugh or Mrs. Osbourn would willingly take your daughter and give her excellent training."

Miss Rachel was altogether unprepared for the flush of anger that burned hotly on the cheek of the indignant mother. She could not speak for vexation, and her breath came chokingly. Hot tears rushed to the black eyes.

"Would you expect me to let that child go to service?" she exclaimed with scorn. "Why, she might have done that if we'd stayed in the old country. Not here where every one is free, and all are equals. I look higher by far than that for my only daughter."

Miss Rachel said no more. She opened the little drawer where she kept her money, took out a bill and a handful of silver, and gave the whole to Mary.

"After all she's your child, and a very dear girl," she said. "Only don't spoil her by foolish notions. It does a girl like that no good whatever to see her mother toiling like a slave, while she lives in idleness. At the best of things, your pet will probably be the wife of a poor man. Do not unfit her to make a poor man's home happy."

Gypsey Mary tossed her head. She had her own dreams. Among them was one of her daughter with rings on her fingers and diamonds on her corsage, robed in shimmering silks, living in splendor, marrying no poor man, but some rich man's son. Oftener than the unobservant fancy, this picture of wealth and prosperity in the future, fills the whole foreground of a mother's imagination, when she is herself overborne by toil and poverty, and hemmed in by narrowing limitations. Around the figure of her pretty young daughter, she weaves the possible enchantments of many a fairy-tale. If the daughter grow selfish and vain and useless under the conditions of indulgence which so foolish a mother considers appropriate it is only what may be expected.

With the money Miss Rachel lent her, Mary stocked a basket, filling it with pins, needles, thread, soap,

and various small wares, and thenceforth, day in and day out, she took the road, heedless of weather or wind or wet. She appeared at back doors and area doors, sold her goods to the maids in great houses, or to the women who themselves kept house, in more modest neighborhoods, and every Saturday night she paid an installment on her debt to Miss Rachel. Before many weeks the route she had established became a paying one, and she had built up a decent trade, her daughter doing the work at home, and having a supper ready for her when she came in weary at nightfall. The little home did not lack an atmosphere of comfort, and nothing went from it to the pawn-shop. When Mary could not sell her soap or her pins, she told fortunes, promising this confiding lass a husband, and the next a pot of gold, and the next a long journey, and leaving them half convinced that she really could peer into that hidden future which so mysteriously beckons those who are not altogether satisfied with the present.

The women of the Hollow meanwhile stood gossiping idly in their doorways, or sat disconsolately beside their cold hearths. Cupboards were bare. Children clamored for food. Tables that had been spread with smoking breakfasts and suppers were no longer set. One by one the most cherished possessions, the cabinet organs, the lace curtains, and the sewing machines, the gilt clocks, and the babies' cradles, found their niche in the limbo behind the three golden balls. When the wife pawned her wedding ring and the man his watch, things were at a low ebb. The destruction of the poor is their poverty. It is also their wastefulness. When a little

money did come into pinched hands, it was seldom wisely expended, and Miss Rachel, moving about as almoner, had many and many a bitter heartache, before the estrangement was over, and her brother's mills resumed their activity. The day did come, but her hair grew whiter as she watched for it.

One night a knock roused her in the small hours. She went to her window, raising it quickly.

"Who is there?"

"For Christ's sake, Miss Rachel, come to our house. Our little Jacky is dying."

"It's you, John Elkins?"

"Yes, Miss Rachel."

"Wait for me. I'll be with you directly."

The lady was ready very soon. She slipped on a thick jacket and tied a hood over her head. Snatching several vials from her medicine chest, and taking a loaf from the pantry, she went with John Elkins. Jacky might or might not be dying, but the other children would be hungry when they woke in the morning.

She tramped along through the dark street, past the mill-stream lying black and sluggish in the midnight gloom, that was broken at intervals by the gleam of a lamp flaring wildly in the wind that was rising and sobbing fitfully. John Elkins tramped at her side. She knew him well, a man of few words, and very faithful. Not one who had wanted to join the disaffected, but one of the many who had been compelled to do so by the rules of the organization, and the dictum of the walking delegate.

Once he sighed, a sigh that was like a groan of despair. It was when they came in sight of his little

dwelling where a candle burned in an upper window, and the shadow of a woman was reflected on the white curtain.

"You've had the doctor?" said Miss Rachel.

"She's there now!" answered the man gruffly. Miss Rachel noted the pronoun with wonder and gratitude.

"Old Dr. Redding couldn't come. He's ill himself. His son, the young doctor's off somewhere on a jaunt. Old man Redding sent this lady. But she knows her business. She sent me after you. She doesn't think Jacky can pull through."

"God can save him, John." Miss Rachel's tone was confident.

They entered the house and mounted the stairs. As Miss Rachel crossed the sill, she observed that the windows on the opposite side of the bedroom were wide open, though the night was cold. Women doctors are familiar figures now, but they were novelties then, and still had to conquer the prejudice and reluctance of many people, rich and poor, educated and illiterate alike.

Jacky Elkins was indeed making a brave fight for his life. He was stretched stark naked on a bare pine table, and the doctor was raising his little thin arms and generally acting as she might have done with a drowning person in the effort to restore his waning breath and strength. An odor of strong coffee filled the house. The doctor forced a teaspoonful between the white lips of the child.

As Miss Rachel's eyes met hers, the glance told of failure, and Dr. Sarah Benson lowered her head and clasped her hands as if in dumb resignation.

The father, statuesque in grief, folded his arms, and stood at the foot of the table. The mother, who had been rocking to and fro and weeping, suddenly sprang to her feet, in desperation, with the look of a caged animal that would break its bars if it could.

"You shan't torture my boy any longer, if you can't save him! Give him to me. Let me dress him. You've killed him, keeping him naked in this cold room!"

"Sophy," said Miss Rachel, "sit down, my dear. Let me hold Jacky!"

She caught up a gray blanket shawl that was lying on the foot of the bed, an old shawl that Sophy Elkins had used for a wrap by day and a coverlet by night ever since her marriage ten years ago.

Turning to the doctor, Miss Rachel addressed her.

"Is there nothing more to be tried?"

"Nothing more. It's baby pneumonia. The child's past human saving. I was called in too late."

"The child's not past God's saving," said Miss Rachel, wrapping him in the old gray shawl, and holding him in her stout old arms.

She stepped down-stairs and out the front door. The father, the mother, and the doctor followed her. Out of doors into the fresh, pure, strong wind, blowing cold and clear from the north. Up and down, up and down, up and down, tirelessly, like a sentry on duty, paced the sturdy woman, holding the child close to her breast, wrapped in the old gray shawl. After awhile she paused, and beckoned to the group on the threshold.

"Is there any change?"

The doctor peeped at the small wizened face,

peeped, surprise and gladness breaking like a sunrise in her own countenance.

"Miss Rachel, you have wrought a miracle!" she said.

"The child is better?"

"The child will live!"

"Thank God!" ejaculated Miss Rachel, giving the boy to his father, who had followed her in a tireless tramp up and down.

"It is God's miracle," said Miss Rachel, as she sank down exhausted in Sophy Elkins' Boston rocker, while Sophy brought her a slice of the bread she had laid down when she came in, and poured her a cup of coffee.

Jacky needed careful nursing and it was a week or more before he was able to hold up his head, but he was saved. And before night, the fame of Miss Rachel's deed was told in every home in the Hollow, and every man there was her sworn knight and soldier, and every woman loved her as a sister.

Miss Rachel was no sentimental philanthropist. She was a very practical woman, who abhorred dirt and shiftlessness, and did her duty in that state where God had been pleased to call her. It was characteristic of her to forget what she did in the line of self-denial and to make light of every sacrifice. But for once she was not permitted to escape the reward of much outspoken gratitude, and her brother, seldom given to much expansiveness, when next he met her, fairly took her in his arms.

"You are splendid," he said. "You are like our mother. Good women like you, Rachel, with sense and knowledge, are worth more than armies. When

peace comes after these disturbances, it will be to your credit. There!" And he kissed her, as a brother might, with a hug such as he had not given her in twenty years.

"Oh, what a bear you are, Donald!" she remonstrated, shaking her ruffled plumage. "You know I don't like kisses!"

To run away from the gratitude of the women, she took a little holiday from the Rest Hall, and went to stay a few days with the Osbourns.

"Aren't we rather magnificent?" was her first remark, as after a quiet dinner she sat with her host and hostess in their cozy drawing-room. Both women had been to the nursery for a good-night look at Lee, who, rosy and dimpled, was a great contrast to the pallid children of the Hollow, wan-cheeked and thin, as no children who belonged even remotely to the Waugh interests had ever been before. Harry with a book and a pipe looked up, as Miss Rachel spoke. But Eleanor answered,

"The house has been done over. It was in a fearful state. And I've bought a new rug or two. That's all."

"Well, the result justifies your taste. The rug is a dream. It couldn't be more beautiful, with those dim colors melting into one another so wonderfully, while your foot sinks into it as into velvet. I live on bare floors, you know, so you must not be amazed at my admiration."

Eleanor, who seldom looked dissatisfied, hesitated before she said,

"You are the first one to praise my new possessions. Mother is silent, Kathleen grave, and Harry non-committal. The fact is I have lately let myself

go, and I'm not sure that it's been quite right. But I've been saving and skimping so long that I'm tired, and I was determined not to let the house be shabby, when I had a nest-egg in the bank on which I could draw."

Miss Rachel looked inquiringly.

"You never heard about that nest-egg, of course. It was a little legacy from a far-away cousin who, like myself, was an Eleanor Lee. It came just when I was most tired of my economies, and I made up my mind I'd spend a little of it. The worst of such spending is, one never knows when to stop. You get one new thing and then you want another and another. Each pretty thing you buy costs you some peace of mind, because it sends you out to look for another pretty thing to match it. And what with my having the house refitted and decorated and everything else, I've grown tired and cross, and so has Harry, poor fellow!"

"Speak for yourself, dear!" said Harry, smiling from his book. But Miss Rachel noticed that he did look unwontedly tired, and she knew perfectly well that a weary man may sometimes be a little cross.

When the hour came to retire Eleanor accompanied Miss Rachel to the guest-room.

I know that the guest-chamber, once a feature in every refined home, is passing so rapidly that our children will scarcely keep the memory of it. But when Eleanor Osbourn and Mattie Waugh and other women who now have silver hair were in their bloom, and wore lightly the honors of young matronhood, the guest-room was as much an object of solicitude as the library or the dining-room. Here the lady of

the house, beautiful old title this, full of sweetest charm and most gracious dignity, put her finest napery, her handsomest furniture and her most luxurious bed. Everything was of the best. Nothing that could add to a visitor's pleasure or convenience was ever omitted. There was stationery, there were stamps, there were books, and candlesticks, with soft dressing-gowns and bedroom slippers, in case of their being needed in the night.

Miss Rachel looked appreciatively over Eleanor's lovely room. Not a detail escaped her eye, and the exquisite nicety of the whole was in itself a very great pleasure.

"My darling Eleanor," she said, as she sank into an easy chair, "this is the most delightful room in your delightful house, and I just love to be here in it with you. But pardon me, child, I've known you since you were born, and your husband since he married you, and I can see that there's something awry. Don't you want advice? I'm mother-confessor in my safe estate of trusted old maid, to such a number of my neighbors, that I begin to fancy I can help anybody out of any tangle. *Is there any tangle, dearest?*"

Eleanor seated herself on a hassock at Miss Rachel's feet and rested her arm on Miss Rachel's lap. She was about to speak, when Harry called her from the foot of the stairs.

"Eleanor dear, don't keep Miss Rachel talking until midnight. Come down. I want you."

So Eleanor said good-night and went down, and she did not then receive the good advice Miss Rachel might have given.

XXV

PROBLEMS

BREAKFAST over the next morning Eleanor sent for a carriage and took Miss Rachel for a drive. Their final objective point was Mrs. Lee's, where they were to lunch, but before going there, Eleanor purposed making a morning of it. She had an errand at her dressmaker's. She took Miss Rachel in to see Mattie, and they stopped by the way for a visit to little Lois in her kindergarten, and so in one or another pleasant loitering Miss Rachel rested all the morning.

As they turned a corner, they caught a glimpse of Gypsey Mary plodding on with her basket, and Miss Rachel gave her a neighborly nod.

"We are both rather far afield," she said. "Do, Eleanor, buy some pins from Mary. Stop the carriage, and let us bid her good-morning. And when we've finished that, let's just drive to the Hollow and inquire for Jacky Elkins."

Here Eleanor demurred.

"I am giving you a vacation. Even saints need one now and then. It isn't an original remark, so you have no occasion to blush, Miss Rachel, though you are a saint in good earnest. Why must we go to look after Jacky, please?"

"You are a mother, Eleanor. If Lee had been as near death as Jacky has been, you would want

those who love you to call and ask for him. Sophy Elkins leans on me, and I cannot fail her. I must go all the more that the Elkins are so desperately poor."

"Their own fault, isn't it?" said Eleanor, coldly.

"Our troubles are usually due to our own fault," was Miss Rachel's comment. "But that speech is not like you, dear. Why are you so frugal in sympathy?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm bankrupt in sympathy lately. I've been getting colder and harder and more horrid for the last year."

She gave the coachman the order to drive to the Hollow.

"We won't drive to the very door of Mrs. Elkins' home," said Miss Rachel. "We'll stop at the corner, out of sight of her house, and then you and I will walk there. I want you to see the little woman with her brood. She's a brave little woman."

John was at home, but he drew back into the shadow, after a warm greeting to Miss Rachel. Sophy met her with outstretched hand.

"The little fellow is all right again," she said.

Eleanor was touched at his pallor, and his hollow eyes. She gathered him up in her arms, and brooded over him as she did over her own Lee, and when she went away, she slipped a gold piece into his mother's hand. Sophy shook her head.

"You must take it, Mrs. Elkins. It is not for you. It's for the baby. Buy something he wants."

"You haven't been near me or my people for an age," Miss Rachel made the statement positively as they drove away towards the boulevard that led

down to the sea. The salt breeze swept towards them like a lover, its touch a caress.

"I have been nowhere, dear Miss Rachel, except with mother, whose blindness is increasing so rapidly that I spend a good deal of time with her. Kathleen and I seldom leave her alone. Max Pomfret, of all people, reads to her every evening."

"Ah, he misses his home, and his mother, though he neglected them so long. There's good in that man, Eleanor."

"He's a queer mixture!"

"What I want to know is what ails you, and what ails Harry?"

"I can't tell you what ails Harry. He's over-worked, I'm afraid. He has spells of being tired and irritable. Then, when I'm on the point of sending for the doctor, he's all right, and there's nothing you can put a finger on. What ails me, Miss Rachel, is that I never have money enough."

"With your large income? You must manage badly."

"I'm afraid I don't manage very well. I know I spend more than I ought, but I have no idea why."

"Harry should give you an allowance."

"Harry says that he does not believe in allowances for a wife whose husband does not regard her as a child. Whatever belongs to him belongs to me and he is not willing that there should be anything commercial in our relations. The income Harry makes I suppose is fluctuating."

"I understood the contrary," said Miss Rachel before she thought. She had the impression that Donald paid him a large salary. But she might of

course be mistaken. Anyhow it was not her business.

"Whatever he has or has not it is Harry's nature to be very lavish and very sanguine. He sees things in rose color. He anticipates the very best always, and his geese are swans. Then he has the queerest streaks of parsimony, reactions when he is as *stingy* as he has been lavish. I make bills and Harry is charmed till the bills come in. But oh! what will you think of me, as a wife, chattering on in this fashion? I do not think a wife has any right to talk so of her husband and I never used to do it. I fear I am degenerating, Miss Rachel."

"I invited you and tempted you, Eleanor, so I am to blame. You and Harry are making a mistake that is very common among us. More married people show singular stupidity on this one subject than on any other in the wide world. Domestic finance should be reduced to a system and domestic peace would be insured. It is again an old maid's wisdom, Eleanor, that you are listening to."

"My dear old friend, I am sure you are right. What would be your panacea?"

"Have a plain straightforward talk with your husband, dear, and a clear understanding about what you may and what you may not spend. Insist on an arrangement that is perfectly businesslike and keep within your margin. Have an allowance for the household, and one for your personal wants. You will find your difficulties magically dissipated."

"Do you administer counsel of this sort to your people in the Hollow, Miss Rachel?"

"When things are normal there, I have no need.

The wife is the purse-holder, and as chancellor of the exchequer, she manages admirably. The husband brings her his earnings, and so do the children. Except what he spends for drink, when he is intemperate, she receives all. That of course is another story."

In an instant Miss Rachel regretted her allusion. She sheered away from it.

"Why do you not come to help us any more, dear? We'd like your voice and your playing sometimes."

"I've slipped away from so many things, Miss Rachel. I'm afraid I've grown selfish."

"Oh, I don't think so; I think you've had a good many absorbing interests. Your boy takes up a good deal of time, and your mother, and I saw a pile of severe looking books in your room and concluded you were studying something profound. Then you have social duties. You know many people now and Islington is not the simple little town it used to be."

They dropped serious subjects and talked of indifferent matters until they reached Mrs. Lee's. There Miss Rachel saw that the daughters were indeed much occupied with their mother. The surgeon's knife could not as yet restore the lost vision. There must be a period of patient waiting. She was at once impressed with the serenity on Mrs. Lee's face. Hitherto a woman of the greatest activity with multiform affairs pressing on her heart and hands, she was now contented to sit still and delegate much to others. She did not fret or disturb herself or her family by vain repinings and her bright smile as she

took Miss Rachel's hand was a revelation of what may be wrought in character by God's moulding hand for those who simply trust and take the day as it comes.

"No, dear, I don't find the time hanging heavily," she said. "I have so much to be thankful for, and so much to enjoy."

"Whatsoever falleth thee," said Archbishop Leighton, "receive it not from the hand of any creature, but from Him alone, and render back all to Him, seeking in all things His pleasure and honor, the purifying and subduing of thyself. What can harm thee, when all must first touch God, in whom thou hast enclosed thyself?"

"I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see ;
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand,
And follow Thee."

This had become the spirit in which Mrs. Lee ordered her days. In consequence of this a great peacefulness surrounded her like an atmosphere, and her home was as cheery as it ever had been, the sunlight of the inner life prevailing over the shadow that lay upon the mistress, so far as actual sight was concerned. Mrs. Lee was contented, and contentment is in itself a strength. She knew too that in God's providence relief would probably come, and while she waited for it she was singularly happy.

The sensitiveness that seems a distinguishing trait of the blind, made her realize that Eleanor's sunshine was under a cloud. She accurately measured cause and effect, and was not troubled about it. Little

troubled her now, and her mood was so restful that tired Miss Rachel felt it, and was soothed as if she heard sweet music.

"I never saw anything that changes so little as this home does," she said, looking about her. "Your furniture does not wear out, your house seems never in want of repair, you do not change, as other people do, Mrs. Lee."

"Oh, life's wear and tear is visible on us all, and our wear and tear shows itself on our homes, of course, but where everything is already mellowed by time, and long usage has accustomed us to a certain shabbiness, it gets to have an effect of elegance. I could not be interested in much change in this house. If the judge could come back, it would look the same to him, as when he went to the other land. He would see changes in the children and me. I often speculate on that subject, Rachel. 'Shall we know each other there?' is a question that awakens conjecture. Shall we know each other the instant we set foot on that shore of so many hopes, so many dreams? I have grown old since my husband saw me last."

"Old in the outward only, and that will drop away, and you will look as you did when you were young and strong. I have never had any speculation about that," replied Miss Rachel. "You recall that bit of poetry Kathleen learned to recite in school, 'The Masquerade'? When the child was tottering along with an old poke bonnet and a long old cloak, and stumbled, don't you remember?"

"Not I," said Mrs. Lee. "Here is Kathleen. Let us test her memory."

Kathleen was not reluctant. Her mind was a storehouse of odds and ends that she had collected in her childish days, when she had been expected to commit things to memory. It is not a bad plan to do this when one is young. The treasure house usually proves a safe place of deposit.

“ A little old woman before me
Went slowly down the street,
Walking as if awearу
Were her feeble, faltering feet.

“ From under her old poke bonnet
I caught a gleam of snow,
And her waving cap-string fluttered
Like a pennon to and fro.

“ In the folds of her rusty mantle
Sudden her footsteps caught,
And I sprang to keep her from falling,
With a touch as quick as thought.

“ Mantle and cap together
Fell off at my very feet,
And there stood my winsome daughter,
Beautiful, blushing, sweet.

“ Shall it be like this, I wonder,
When we come at least to stand
On the golden, gleaming pavement,
Of the blessed, blessed land.

“ Losing the rusty garments
We wore in the years of Time,
Shall our better selves spring forward,
Serene in a youth sublime,

“ Instead of the shapes that hid us,
And made us old and gray,
Shall we get the child-heart back again
With a lightness that will stay?”

Kathleen curtseyed low.

"I have said my piece."

"Thank you, dearest. You have said it very well. You may go and play."

Then Mrs. Lee and Miss Rachel resumed their talk about Eleanor.

"With my child's temperament," said the mother, "it is inevitable that she shall feel unstrung at times. Eleanor is seldom free from strain, though it is often sub-conscious. She has not entirely thrown off apprehension, that sometime, something else will happen to her or to her dear ones, and just now she is leaning too heavily on her will power, and too slightly on God's grace. God teaches us by ways that He finds best, that we must lean on Him."

"You have confidence in Him, let what may happen."

"Yes, Rachel dear, absolute confidence."

"You don't fear, or you don't think Eleanor fears, a relapse for Harry, do you?" asked Miss Rachel, venturing on delicate ground, for this was a subject avoided by the Lees and their friends.

"I fear nothing, Rachel. I sometimes fancy Eleanor has fears, but not of the sort of thing she has once undergone. Luncheon is ready. Don't let us dwell on this. Some things are best left unspoken."

"I beg your pardon for having spoken."

"No, you have no need. I am glad you did. Eleanor is happy to-day. I can tell by her voice. Is she looking well, Rachel?"

"She is looking lovely," said Miss Rachel. "Whoever saw Eleanor otherwise?"

As they chatted over their salad and chocolate, the

conversation turned on education, and it presently was manifest that Eleanor was already going to college with Lee. As is the custom with mothers, particularly when they have but one child, she was forecasting the years, and carrying much luggage that was not yet to be seen, which at the moment had no place on the journey.

"Lee isn't yet in the kindergarten," Kathleen laughed, as she declared that she would wait for her son, when he arrived, to grow up before she distressed herself about him, his electives, his sports, and the profession he was to adorn.

Kindergartens were comparatively new, and Harry regarded them as the merest play-schools, and scoffed at the idea of their doing a child any good. But Eleanor was convinced of their beneficial effect on a child's development, and so Lee was to begin his school education in one of them, the very next week.

"I am so very much at sea," she told her mother. "Lee is such a little tempest; he flies into such rages at times, and then again, he is so destructive, breaking up his toys, and flinging everything around. And I don't know about teaching him much about God and the soul. He is so little to be confronted with the great mysteries."

"Eleanor dear," said Mrs. Lee, "can you remember a time when you did not pray to God, or when you did not know that a certain book lying on my table, was God's Book?"

"No, dear mother."

"I was no theorist, but as soon as the baby hands could be folded together in mine, I said a little prayer over them for my baby, and as soon as each child

could speak in broken syllables, I taught my little ones a prayer to say themselves. I believe that children should grow up into God's kingdom, as the plants grow in the garden, and that nothing should be forced. Pray for Lee, and teach him to pray. As for his little bursts of temper many of them are simply due to inexperience and lack of vocabulary. Pass them over without notice, and try diversion. Children sometimes like to make a sensation. They enjoy the dramatic effect of what they do, and there is more danger in accentuating their mistakes by punishment, than in letting them alone."

"Your mother is right, dear," said Miss Rachel. "Now I've an idea. Can we not have a kindergarten on a small scale, perhaps at the Rest, so that the little tots of the Hollow may have the privileges granted to the little tots of the Hill?"

"It would cost money."

"Why of course it would. But a few bright women joining together could easily raise the money. Think of the good it would do. We have a day nursery now. A kindergarten should follow as the next step."

"If you want any more care, Miss Rachel dear, you should not be balked in your inclination. I will set about starting a free kindergarten at once. I've been wanting something outside of my home, and for other people to do with both hands, and this may be the very thing. Kathleen, get pencils and paper, and let us make a list of all our friends and acquaintances."

Eleanor's enthusiasm kindled. She forgot that she was run down and a little tired, and not quite up to

the usual mark, and thus the first free kindergarten in the Old Field Hollow had its birth.

Miss Rachel returned to her people and her work, greatly freshened after her brief outing. The welcome that she received was as spontaneous and as cordial as if she had been away for six months. The women who surrounded Miss Rachel Waugh felt bereaved if she were away from her usual place a single day.

XXVI

AN OBSTACLE OR TWO

THE obstacle nobody foresaw was naturally the first stumbling-block in the path of the free kindergarten. Women who were readily persuaded to entrust their babies to the kind care of the day nursery, while they went to their work of scrubbing or washing, saw no sense as they openly said in letting the children next older than the babies, attend so foolish a school as one where the teacher played with them and they used pins and chalk and clay, and did not learn to read. They shared the objections of Harry Osbourn, and were loud in stating them.

"But," remonstrated Mattie Waugh, who was urging the new school for the tiny girls and boys, on a group of protesting mothers, "I send my child to a kindergarten. Lois goes. Why shouldn't your Miriam, and your Bessie, and your Maria, go to such a school as my Lois attends?"

The argument made its impression. One matron however opposed it.

"Lois Waugh will be rich. Our kids will never be anything but poor. This kindergarten nonsense will fill their heads with ideas above their pockets."

This met with no favor. Mrs. Waugh was much liked in the Hollow, and her opinions carried weight. If she thought that sticking pins into cardboard, and

making clay images, and playing fanciful games, would do good to the boys and girls, before they went to the primary school, there must be something in it.

"The brats will be out o' the street and out o' mischief," one practical woman said, summing up the matter.

Next came another aspect of the obstacle. Kindergartners were then few, as compared with the present multiplicity of bright young women who have mastered the system, and whose study of childish peculiarities has been deep and loving. One was found, but though in other things prepared to do good work, she was not in touch with this environment.

"I'd rather wait and teach nice children, from a pleasant neighborhood, at a less salary," she said. "I don't care to come here."

"Nor would we care to have you," answered Eleanor quietly. Eleanor was president of the Board of Managers. "It is imperative that we have to help these little children people who love them."

When the young lady, a little crestfallen but quite resolute in her determination to keep the poor at a good distance from her dainty self, had gone away, and the door was shut behind her, Eleanor astonished her associates.

"I'll teach the children myself for the next month or two," she announced. "It's absurd, it's disgusting, that a young woman should take the stand that girl did. When our Lord said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,' do you suppose He meant only the rich children, the children of the kings and nobles; I don't. I'm sure He meant the children of the pauper and the peasant."

This was the old Eleanor, vehement, impulsive, not counting the cost. As the meeting dissolved, a room having been assigned for the new kindergarten in the capacious hall, and a committee designated with authority to purchase small chairs and tables and simple apparatus and supplies, Kathleen walked home with Eleanor and Mattie. The latter had sent her carriage home an hour before, desiring a long walk with her friends.

"Harry Osbourn will veto that proceeding of yours," exclaimed Mattie, the instant the hall's door was shut.

"Yes indeed he will," echoed Kathleen. "Why, Eleanor, you know Harry's increasing dislike to you piling up engagements outside the home. He's most unreasonable I think, but he's Harry, and you ought to have consulted him before you pledged yourself."

Sisterly freedom this, but Eleanor only smiled.

"Harry's not a Turk. I give up to him now more than is for his good or mine. I'm going to turn over a new leaf."

Mattie Waugh looked very doubtful.

"Turning over new leaves when it's a case of overcoming one's husband's prejudices is a pretty hard task. I turn over no new leaves with Donald. If girls were wise they'd begin with more independence than they do in the first years, and then they'd never have new leaves to turn."

"I shall do just as I please," said Eleanor firmly. Yet her heart quaked a little. At the moment of making her determined offer, she had overlooked the wifely necessity of consulting and conferring with

Harry. She knew, as well as did her sister and her friend, that Harry could be obstinate, and that on this occasion he probably would be. There might be a contest. If there were, Eleanor was not at all sure that she would yield. Kathleen saw the trouble in her eyes.

"Use tact, Eleanor," she said. "Don't bring this matter up until Harry is in a very good humor, and in the mood to grant your requests."

"One would suppose you thought Harry a bear," said Eleanor indignantly. "What a fuss over nothing at all! I'm not proposing to be a kindergartner the rest of my life. I'm only stepping into the breach for a few weeks. One thing I'll never stoop to, sister, is to use tact when I'm talking with my own husband. This is a queer conversation of ours. It lacks dignity."

It was dropped. At dinner that night Mattie Waugh mentioned Eleanor's intention to Donald, who laughed indulgently.

"What a child that woman is to be sure. What's to become of her home duties when she's gallivanting off in that manner? Her husband will never allow it. You and she must wait about that kindergarten till you find a competent teacher. Money will bring her. Mind, Mattie, I'll not have you going off at any such tangent."

"Don't be alarmed, Donald. But keep your prohibitions until you have cause for them. I have expressed no such intention."

Mattie spoke hastily, and her color rose. She was ruffled.

Donald laughed again. An exhibition of temper

on the part of his quiet, complacent little wife always amused him.

"You look very pretty with that flush on your cheek, dear."

"Don't think to placate me by a compliment, Donald," but Mattie was appeased nevertheless.

"I have so much confidence in your flawless wisdom, Mattie, that my forbidding you anything is only the form of speech intended as a shield around my masculine prerogative of keeping the upper hand. Seriously, I don't think Eleanor has health and strength and nerves for steady work in a school-room every morning of her life. Do you?"

"Indeed I do not."

As they left the dining-room, Donald held open the door for Mattie to pass out first. In the drawing-room he bent over her and kissed her smooth forehead. She reached up and took his hand in hers. A large powerful hand still, she was struck by its thinness and alarmed. Donald, in the light of the lamps, looked gray and gaunt.

"I want you to lie down on the divan," said Mattie, "and deny yourself to every caller this evening. I'll cover you up, and then I'll read to you, or play for you, or entertain you somehow. We'll have one of our old Darby and Joan evenings. Shall we?"

They started with this intention, but Mattie neglected to give orders to her servants, and in the midst of a scientific paper she was reading from a magazine the door opened, and the man announced,

"Mr. and Mrs. Osbourn."

In they came. Mattie took care that no one else

should be received. The Osbourns were almost like themselves.

Eleanor threw off the long cloak and hood she had worn, and began her errand without delay. Donald had risen on her entrance. Greetings were hardly over when she exclaimed,

"Mattie, you and Kathleen were right and I was wrong. Harry disapproves of my attempting any more work, not that I couldn't do it, but he says that I must keep myself fresh for Lee's sake, and I am convinced, against my will, that he is right. So, I'll have to withdraw my offer."

"I tell Eleanor," said Harry, "that she can supervise as much as she wishes to, but that she can't go down there for the drudgery. It wouldn't be fair. She's too busy for that kind of thing. And she's been lovely about looking at it through my eyes. Of course, if it were a matter of heartbreak to her, or of life and death to the Hollowites, I would not oppose her for a minute. But I've persuaded her to agree with me!"

"Hoot mon!" cried Donald. "You have a persuasive tongue in your head, as many a jury has found out. Come to my den, and we'll leave the ladies to the discussion of this mighty matter. Don't worry, girls," he called out in his biggest voice, "I'll send across the water and get you the finest teacher money can allure from the other side."

Left alone, Mattie and Eleanor looked at one another with interrogation in the eyes of Mattie, and revelation in the eyes of Eleanor.

"You said you would decide just as you pleased?" This from Mrs. Waugh.

"I have. I cannot put myself in the position of treating Harry's views with contempt. Pray, did you fancy I should?"

"Not for an instant," answered Mattie.

The kindergarten in the Hollow was only a little delayed by these passages. Before many weeks it was in successful operation, with a flaxen-haired German girl presiding over its rhythmic games and songs. It wrought a revolution in the little men and women who came joyously to its happy precincts, each of them learning at the close of the morning how to sit at a table and eat an appetizing meal, with the good manners to which more fortunate children are born.

Eleanor, as it happened, had very little to do with it, beyond attending managers' meetings, for Lee just then had a succession of those diseases from which little children suffer, mumps, measles, whooping-cough, and he needed his mother's continual care. That he came through these reefs and shoals of childhood not much the worse, was owing to her sedulous vigilance. When Lee was ill, his mother was his chief nurse, and it was she, not he, who was white and wan, when the doctor ceased his daily visits.

THE BURDEN OF WEALTH

LITTLE Lois Waugh was more and more her father's helper, because more and more as the years brought their harvesting, he felt the pressure of the burden of wealth. Those who have attained the golden mean in this world, who have neither poverty nor riches, are to be congratulated. Abundance, when it touches the superlative, brings with it such added responsibility, that its possessor often spends sleepless nights and knows wearisome days.

One of Donald Waugh's jealously cherished habits was that of personally answering every letter that came to his home. As his health lost something of its earlier elasticity, and gave subtle signs of breaking, his wife begged him to lay aside this custom and employ a secretary, or else let a part of the correspondence lie on the table, for attention when there came leisure. Mattie herself did not hold the pen of a ready writer, and her good sense kept her from attempting more than she could do, but her entreaties were of no avail. Day by day the postman brought the ever accumulating pile of letters, letters, letters, until they assumed in Donald's mind a shape akin to that of the frogs of Egypt, when they invaded the bedrooms and the kneading troughs, the courts and the secret chambers of the old Egyptians in the days when the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

"I wis' He would harden you heart, papa," said precocious little Lois one morning, when she saw the frown deepen on her father's face. "I wis' you'd burn up the letters, all of them."

"Hush, Lois, what a naughty wish!" exclaimed her mother. "The truth is, Donald, we talk too freely before this child. She is growing unchildlike,—it's almost uncanny."

"Run away, darling," said the father of Lois, with a smile that lit his rugged face. "What would father do without his blessing?"

"You spoil her," interposed the mother.

"Love does not spoil," he answered, with a tender look towards the doorway where the stiff white frock and red-gold head of his daughter were disappearing. "Mattie, will you tell me how people find me out? Here, child, drop your housewifery and at least help me sort out to-day's mail."

Among the letters were those which came to husband and wife as legitimate claims, reminders of subscriptions about to lapse, certain annuities they paid annually to keep in comfort old pensioners and retainers of their families, and calls for aid from causes to which both were more or less pledged. But these were in the minority. People whom the Waughs did not know and of whom they had never so much as heard, people who lived in distant states, wrote to them preferring all sorts of petitions. One family asked a sum of money to pay off a mortgage. Another had a gifted daughter for whom they sought the means for a musical education in Italy. Yet another wanted a piano and stated their preference as to the maker. The pleas were couched in terms of

fulsome admiration, or were stated tersely, so that they assumed the air of demands, and the mere replying to them was a tax that grew even less easy to bear.

"Look here, Donald!"

Mattie's lips were pressed together; her eyes were steadily fixed on her husband's face.

"Lois, dear baby, was wiser than we. The real place for most of this impudent rubbish is the fire. Listen. From this time on, if you notice these unknown writers who are crying give, give, you must either have a clerk and let him come here daily, or else have a printed form, and use it. The new little invention, the typewriter, will be a great help to men situated as you are. My mind is made up, Donald. I'm not going to let you have paralysis from overwork of this sort, without a protest. Your every-day work is more than enough for one man to carry."

"You may be right," he assented rather against his will.

"Certainly I am right, but right or wrong, I'm not going to stand by and see you kill yourself. You, who have been so strong, ought not to break so easily or so soon, as you will if this is not stopped."

"Another thing," said Mattie, after a pause, "is pressing on me. We've reached the place where we need a country home. This used to be country-like here on the hill, but the city has been creeping upward, and we must fly from it. We must have a place of escape."

Donald shook his head.

"I was born and bred in Islington, my dear, and it

is good enough for me still. I am perfectly satisfied with this home."

A spacious home it was, with a wide central hall, and lofty-ceiled rooms opening on either side. Every appointment spoke of luxury and the nameless atmosphere of wealth that need count no item of cost, filled it from cellar to attic. Donald felt no little pride in the solidity and subdued magnificence of this mansion, and from time to time he had built here a wing, there a room or two, until it had become, in his view, an ideal home. Mattie's proposition did not commend itself to him, and, as he was a person whose mental processes outside of business ruts were never swift, as likewise, he was, with men in general, disposed to veto a domestic plan that did not originate in his own brain, he refused to discuss the notion.

"Here we are. Here we will stay!" he observed with an air of finality. Mattie apparently dropped the matter.

Only apparently. That same day she visited the office of a real estate agent and made tentative inquiries about country neighborhoods. She had resolved on buying a cottage for herself if Donald continued to negative her proposal. Fortunately for Mattie, she had her own little fortune, which, under her husband's good management, had trebled, and she was able to do what she chose.

"Are you looking for a summer home, Mrs. Waugh?" asked the agent.

"I have not decided what I will do with it," she replied. "Perhaps I may not occupy the place, but I want to buy a little home that we may step into at

short notice, if we wish to do so. I desire a chimney, a veranda, and a view," she summed up the catalogue of her wants thus conclusively.

Meanwhile, little Lois, the picture of sturdy health, began to pine and require a change. As soon as this became evident, her father concurred in her mother's plans. She smiled when she heard him tell a friend that owing to their little girl's need of fresh air and more space, he had been thinking of buying some big outdoor place where she might be turned into pasture, like a colt.

"I am quite sure," he said most innocently, "that the city is not the best place in which to raise a child." Again, after the manner of men, he had adopted his wife's suggestion as his own, and fancied that he had been the initial possessor of the good idea. Lois drooping like a flower on the stem was potential in bringing about a removal of the family from Islington to a higher altitude for several months. The Islington home was not closed. Donald spent some midweek days there, and a trustworthy house-keeper remained in charge with several maids, so that at any moment the family could return, without an hour's inconvenience.

As for the invading letters, their name was legion still, but a courteous printed form of acknowledgement was substituted for the letter written by hand, and one straw was removed from the load Donald had to bear. By degrees, as Lois galloped to and fro on her pony, fed the chickens, and learned to take care of a garden of her very own, she regained her color and though a weedy, somewhat ungainly child, gave promise of grace when her angles should

be smoothed, and her form fill out. She was more than ever the light of her father's eyes.

Next to her father, Lois had a devoted cavalier in Max Pomfret. Why Max, with his easy-going, soft-voiced, southern manner, his tendency to draw the long bow, his slight regard for obligations binding on other men, and his jaunty indifference to money, should have been so great a favorite with Donald, who was in every quality a complete contrast to him, nobody could explain. Max, however, had found the key to the big man's heart and was ensconced there, as few friends were. Donald was aware in himself of an instinctive antagonism which asserted its presence many a time when he was with Harry Osbourn. The impulse to contradict, to argue, to take the other side, was often too strong for him when with Harry, whom he had befriended and supported and tried to like for Eleanor's sake. Distrust of Harry's ability kept pace with belief in it, in a strange paradox, and coupled with this was a determined effort to be more than fair, more than cordial in his intercourse with the man for whom he did not care. The result was a mixture of patronage in his kindest behavior which Harry was quick to feel and resent.

Max Pomfret, on the other hand, never aroused antagonism in the breast of the millionaire, and never was treated with the slightest arrogance. He came into the home on a footing of equality and brotherly comradeship, and gradually was expected to perform any number of little friendly services for Mattie, to undertake her commissions, and to go and come almost when he chose. It was he who

taught Lois to ride, and when there happened to be no governess for her, volunteered to teach her Latin, and trained her in the first intricacies of English grammar. A genius and an inventor, Max had long been a poor man, but he did not disturb himself about it, nor was he unduly elated, when, one morning, by means of a successful invention, he woke up and discovered that he was rich. A few more comforts thereafter were sent to the hermitage, in which his two old sisters were quietly spending their sequestered lives. They had sunk into the cloistral life once more, as if they had never left it. Oftener than of old, Max disturbed that tranquillity, but it was his little mother who was the magnet to draw him. Between the sisters and Max there was little sympathy. It is nearly impossible ever to bridge a gulf which has been made by a long cessation of common interests, and by an unexplained separation. Youth and love and hope and faith dropped into a chasm, are not often drawn up again intact from its abysmal depths.

XXVIII

LOSING HIS GRIP

"**H**ARRY OSBOURN is losing his grip." Max Pomfret was lounging in a large easy chair. Donald Waugh as usual was sitting bolt upright in a stiff backed chair, disdaining ease of attitude. Donald was constitutionally averse to lounging.

"What do you mean?"

Max puffed away intermittently at his pipe before replying. When he spoke it was in his soft Virginian drawl, intensified by feeling. He was extremely fond of Harry.

"I mean *that*. He works harder than ever. He studies without ceasing. But his mind is jaded. He's like a broken-winded horse. He's lost pluck. He spurs himself on to hide his disheartenments from you all, and that makes it worse. I tell you, Mr. Waugh, Harry's losing his grip."

Most inopportunely, Harry walked in. Not a trace of the unfortunate loss which Max described was visible. He was clear-eyed, well-groomed, fastidiously neat, and looked like a prosperous man with whom the world went well. Donald knew that his practice was large, and that whatever legal business he had confided to his care had been safely carried forward. There seemed to be no screw loose.

Nevertheless, though after Harry's departure,

Donald jeered at him, Max Pomfret reiterated his opinion.

"His wife doesn't think that," Donald finally said.

"Not she. But love can be blind. Poor woman. Something will open her eyes."

"Max, your prophecies don't always come true, and your impressions are often mistaken. Pick somebody else out for criticism. Harry Osbourn's all right."

No more was said. Donald had too much on his hands to spend precious time in speculations so vague and discussions so fruitless. At the moment he was engaged in the ordering of a funeral procession, an affair of local pomp and pride. As a leading citizen, many of the preparations were brought to him for approval, and much of the arrangement was laid upon him. The head centre of Islington seemed to be Donald Waugh's office.

A great general had passed away. He had been an Islington man, and to Islington's new cemetery on the hill, overlooking the sea, he was to be brought for burial. The military organizations, the Grand Army of the Republic, many civic orders, many private citizens were to march in array. Donald sent for Harry Osbourn, and found in him no waning of powers as they planned the routine of the day. It was carried through without a hitch or any mortifying delay or break. The last rites were paid to Islington's hero, and he was buried with the flag he loved wrapped around his coffin.

Processions were just then the favorite methods of signalizing notable days and dates, processions and orations. The peculiar joy of Islington focused

around one such fête which it proudly called its own, and which had belonged to it since its embryo village beginnings. Once a year, in the spring, the children of the Sunday-schools walked in long gleaming lines, preceded by music, carrying flowers and parasols and flags, singing now and then as they went along Islington's main streets. It required no little good management to unite the shining columns as they issued from the several churches, the little girls in white with gay sashes and fluttering ribbons, the boys in their best suits, the ministers and deacons and elders marching in their train, and to bring this beautiful grand army of children safe to the day's end. Speeches were made in the churches, and refreshments were served. In this particular year, Lois Waugh and Lee Osbourn both trotted along in line, their mothers walking with them, and Harry Osbourn achieved the rare distinction of making an address to the children in one of the largest churches, an address the children themselves liked and to which they listened.

Many people can talk above children's heads. Many can talk down to children with painstaking endeavor. Only a few have the art of captivating the children, amusing, interesting and satisfying them. This art Harry possessed.

Donald was reassured. He laughed again as he thought of Max's owlish prediction.

"The old fellow's wrong," he murmured. "Osbourn's a stronger man than ever."

As the children, having been dismissed from their separate schools, were going home in twos and threes, and little groups, chatting over the, to them,

momentous afternoon, an incident occurred that confirmed Donald's conclusion. Down the street at breakneck speed dashed a runaway horse, dragging after him a light wagon in which with white terrified faces, sat a lady and a little girl. Faster and faster rushed the horse. The spectators, horrified, expected every second to see the woman and child thrown to the pavement. The road was fortunately clear for several blocks, but directly before the frantic horse was a bridge with stone abutments, and the bridge spanned the river that divided North from South Islington.

Harry Osbourn was sauntering homeward slowly, with a step that showed fatigue. The shouts and shrieks of the crowd aroused him. He heard the thunder of the horse's hoofs, the clatter of the carriage. He caught a glimpse of the lady's deathly pale face.

In an instant, quick as lightning, he strode directly in front of the horse, and caught the bridle. It was a feat few men could have performed successfully, but this man was tall, strongly built, and fearless of physical danger, and had known and ruled horses from his boyhood. The horse swerved, stopped short, and stood panting.

Harry recognized the lady as a neighbor. There were many hands ready to help her from her seat and to lift down her little child. A man in the throng stepped out to lead the horse back.

"Ah, Mrs. Lindsay," said Harry, as she uttered broken thanks in a tremulous voice, "don't thank me. Thank God, you and the baby are not killed. And dear lady, after this, let me urge you, as I urge

my wife, never to trust any horse, anywhere, unless you have hold of the reins."

"My brother Will was driving. He had just stepped into a store for a second, and something, I don't know what, frightened Firefly," she explained.

"Well, remember my advice. A horse is a vain thing for safety."

Harry continued his walk home. He was tired and shaken up, and his head throbbed.

"That a trifle like this should upset me," he muttered. "I must be losing my grip."

Once at home and in his own quiet den, a strange thing happened. Not for years, not since the hour when he knelt at the altar in the Methodist meeting, had the old temptation assailed Harry Osbourn. He had felt himself immune from that. Though men had poured out wine in his presence, though he had sat at dinners where toast after toast was offered and drank in sparkling glasses, though he had passed saloons whence the reek of the liquor came out on the sidewalk, he had not been tempted. To-day, for some unaccountable reason, the devil pounced upon him again and took him by the throat. The lust, the desire, the rage of eager anxiety, were so peremptory, that the conflict was fierce. It shook him literally as a terrier shakes a rat. He strove against it but weakly, dumbly, faint-heartedly. Presently he slipped down the stairs, so furtively that it was to himself, when he opened his front door, as if he sneaked out of the house and, with rapid strides, made for the nearest drug store.

"Give me a half-pint of your best brandy for medicinal use," he said to the clerk, paying for the bottle

when it was handed him, and sheltering it under his light overcoat, as if it were something precious.

A physician who was standing back of the prescription counter observed the glitter in Harry's eyes, and the quick almost feverish clutch of his hand as he took the bottle from the clerk.

"If I did not know Osbourn for a teetotaller," he said, "I would fancy he had at some time been a drunkard."

"Mr. Osbourn?" the proprietor asked, "the lawyer who lives just round the corner? He never drinks."

"I know it," answered the doctor.

Harry went home. The mocking devil that dogged his footsteps, invisible but real, slipped over the door sill with him, and its black shadow crossed the hall and entered Harry's room.

"Father dear?" called a little voice.

"Yes, Lee, my laddie."

"It's been a buful time, father. I'm goin' to say my prayers."

The father turned the key of his desk on the black bottle and came into the nursery. The little child knelt at his knee, white robed for bed, his curls damp against his pure forehead.

"I can say, 'Our Father in Heaven' now, as well as 'Now I lay me,'" said the little one proudly. Slowly, reverently, petition after petition fell from the baby lips.

The mocking devil retreated, for just then, invisible too, but most real, a bright angel winged its way straight from the throne, and its white radiance enfolded father and child.

An angel sent on one of God's errands, to strengthen a tempted man. Harry knelt by Lee's crib and prayed for himself, and God heard amid the seraphim and answered swiftly, an answer of peace.

Eleanor kissed her husband and her boy. She was in white. Harry liked her best in that, and she wore it much at home. Her dress fell around her in straight folds, severe, almost classic. Her husband did not tell her of the adventure he had had in coming home, but she saw that he was tired, and she felt a new tenderness in the embrace he gave her. He held her closely, in arms that were loath to let her go, and kissed her with lingering fondness.

"Sweetheart," he murmured.

"Yes, dearest," she answered, gently removing herself from his hold.

"Don't do that," he whispered, "don't take yourself away from me, Eleanor. You are my own. I love you. I love you. Darling, if anything should happen to me, you would be sorry, wouldn't you?"

"If anything should happen to you, Harry, it would kill me, but nothing is going to happen. Why be so tragic, dear? Dinner will be ready presently, and you are not dressed. Please make haste."

In his mood, her aloofness and her commonplace request to hurry and dress for dinner, jarred on the man. How singular it is that we are so dense at times with our best beloved. The devil came a little nearer, the angel drew a little away. But, angel and devil, both unseen, saw one another, and the angel's shield was proof against the demon's darts.

Harry went on with his dressing. Once, twice,

thrice, he turned to the locked desk. But he went on dressing.

From the drawing-room below floated up the sweet voice of his wife, as she sat at the piano. It was a familiar hymn that Eleanor loved.

“There is a green hill far away
 Beyond a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
 Who died to save us all.”

Triumphantly the words rose, and borne on the silvery voice brought their message to his ear, as the tempted man strove with the old demon.

“A green hill far away.” Yes, and on it a cross, and on that cross One mighty to save. Harry Osbourn had a vision of that figure with the nails in His hands and His feet.

He went to the desk, unlocked it, opened his window, and threw the black bottle out, far out, over the garden, into a vacant lot where it fell, shattered among stones and shards and rubbish. The vanquished devil fled. The angel lingered a moment to drop a blessing over little Lee asleep in his white bed. Harry went down to dinner. His wife was still singing.

XXIX

IN THE ROSE GARDEN AGAIN

THE air of Islington vibrated with excitement, and every household felt the atmospheric conditions that followed the strike, rich and poor being bound in one bundle there as everywhere. Tranquillity had flown from the scene. People were in the ground-swell of an agitation foreign to their experience, and not for some weeks or months could former relations be entirely restored and former prosperity return.

One day Eleanor received a cry for help from Clivedon. Not yet had it reached the prominence in business that had been anticipated, although it was making progress, and its features of a reposeful village were essentially the same. Shops had not invaded the residential part of the southern seaport, and the detached homes stood as of old in the shadow of their vines and fig-trees. To the Pomfret girls there seemed no change, as they settled down to the familiar routine of their wools and silks, their Scripture pieces, and endless monotony of fine embroidery and tapestry. Their home was fragrant with potpourri; their garden rich with roses. They never observed that their mother was growing daily more ethereal, that she had to rest frequently, that she tottered when she walked. Had any one hinted it, their feelings would have been indignant. Their mother

belonged to their world, and they never thought of losing her.

A great shock came to them when after a brief illness she passed away. They had so absolutely depended upon her for every detail of their days, much like children in the nursery, that their bewilderment was pitiful. Max went to his mother's funeral, but could not stay long after it, and when he told the Osbourns how desolate Clemmie and Dora were, how impossible it was for them to resume their life, and how they wandered to and fro wringing their hands, and looking like wan ghosts, Eleanor was beyond measure distressed.

"Pick up the boy and go to them, dearest," said her husband. "Make them a little visit. It will do them a lot of good, and it won't hurt you. I'd like you to go to some stiller place than Islington for a breathing-spell."

"Can you go too?"

"I wish I could, but I'm too busy. I cannot even think of it," Harry said.

"Then I don't see how I can be spared. You cannot keep bachelor's hall in any sort of comfort."

"For a fortnight? Why not? Pomfret will stay with me, if you like. 'Tis your Christian duty, Nellie, to cheer up those forlorn little ladies. Pray be persuaded."

Eleanor considered, and to aid her decision there arrived a woeful letter written in Miss Dora's prim crabbed, old-fashioned hand. She could not refuse an invitation that was so pleading, and with her boy and his nurse, she again sought the city by the sea,

where the rose blooms till the short winter melts into the fervid spring, and the violets smile up into the February sky.

What a welcome she received! The Pomfret house had been sought by friendly callers ever since its dear old mistress had gone through its doors to heaven, and now when Eleanor Osbourn came, by some swift conveyance of intelligence everybody knew it. Doctor and Mrs. Abbott, the Moores, and the entire neighborhood, made haste to bring good wishes, and the black people, those who had served in Eleanor's kitchen, came too. The baby was an object of admiration, and his mother did not try to conceal her pride in his sturdy good looks and wonderful good behavior.

She did what she came to do, diverted the two old spinsters, so fragile and wan in their dessicated maturity, so juvenile in their acquaintance with the actual world, and led them to see that they ought not to sit down in despair. They talked continually about their mother, and tiptoed around after Eleanor, barring the shutters she opened and tying them up with black ribbon, giving the house the look and air of a tomb.

"Miss Dora," Eleanor expostulated, "if your dear mother were here would she want you and Miss Clemmie to shut out the light, and go about with such doleful faces?"

"No, Mrs. Osbourn, but respect for her memory makes it incumbent on us to do this. Besides it is the custom."

"Do you believe in another life?"

"Certainly."

"Do you believe that your mother has gone to heaven?"

"Of course. Mother was a consistent Christian while she was here. She said she was glad to go to her Saviour. She was worried about nothing. Oh, not even about Max, and that astonished sister and me. At the very end, her face lit up with the most beautiful smile you ever saw and she reached out her hands, and cried out joyfully, 'Why, Jack!'"

"Who was Jack?"

"Our father. He died when we all were young."

"Now, Miss Dora, to me it is the strangest contradiction the way people act, precisely as if their dear ones were gone forever, or taken to some state of torment, closing doors and windows, and actually making a cult of their sorrow. It isn't Christian, dear, it isn't even pagan, it's, well I don't know what to call it, except that it dishonors the Lord, and does the dear ones no good. When my father died, mother wouldn't have a blind closed, and we kept flowers in every room, for we knew he wanted us to be cheerful. Don't you think you and Miss Clemmie can try my plan, and not mourn in this depressing way?"

"Clemmie will do whatever I say," replied Dora.

"So I fancied. And that's why I'm coaxing you to be brave for her sake."

Suddenly Miss Dora put her hands before her face, and with a great sob broke down, and cried,

"Mrs. Osbourn, we can do it while you stay here, but what shall we do when you go home? For mother walks around at night, and we're frightened, Clemmie and I. I believe she walks in the daytime

too. I wouldn't dare go into the parlor alone, any time, and only last evening, when I was taking the things out of her bureau drawers, I felt her touch my arm, and I glanced in the mirror, and I saw her there, looking so vexed. She never liked us to meddle with her things. An instant after she was gone, but I heard her say, 'Don't, Dora.' "

Eleanor listened, half doubting her sense of sight and hearing. Then she came to a swift decision.

"Miss Dora," she said, "your nerves are all unstrung. You cannot stay in Clivedon at present. You and Clemmie are to turn the key in the door, and go home with me to Islington. I'll telegraph your brother and Harry, and we'll start to-morrow morning."

The sisters were as helpless as captive doves, and Eleanor made every arrangement for them, going to make her farewell visits while they rested in the afternoon. She strolled in their rose garden, and asking permission of the present resident, went into her own old one and into the house that had been hers, and sat in the remembered rooms. In the sunset, she lingered on the veranda and looked dreamily over the blue Elizabeth River, whitened by many sails. From the navy yard, not far away, floated the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner." The spell of the South land was on Eleanor; she wished she might stay forever here in the outdoor country, where all was so blithe, so captivating, so heartsome. The sunset paled, a rosy afterglow suffused the west, and she rose and went back to comfort the timid mourners in the house beyond.

At sunset the next day, the Old Dominion steamer

was ploughing its way through the Chesapeake, and the Pomfret sisters were on board, in the shadow of Eleanor's wing. She knew that the dear mother did not walk about her house for the torment of her children, and she knew that they would know it too, once they regained their poise. It was Dora's own face in the glass, that had looked like her mother's; the likeness was plain. But Eleanor could not have left the two poor things to dree their weird alone. She cared for them as if they were little children.

XXX

TROUBLE THAT WAS NOT FORESEEN

HOME was not reached a day too soon. Max met the travellers as the boat touched the pier.

"Where is Harry?" Eleanor looked around for her husband, disappointed that he was not the first to greet her.

"Harry?" Max repeated her question. Then she saw, shouldering his way through the crowd of people, not Harry, but Donald, and he grasped her hand warmly, saying, "You've had a rough voyage, haven't you? But here you are."

"Where's Harry?" Eleanor was by this time thoroughly alarmed.

Now, Donald had come expressly that he might keep Eleanor from alarm until she was safe from curious eyes, within her own doors. So he guided her towards a carriage, and managed to get her safely in it, then stepped in and took a seat beside her, first giving a direction to the driver. Eleanor heard it.

"No," she said, "I'll go to my own house, Donald."

"Mattie said ——"

"Never mind what Mattie said. I must go home. Is Harry dead?"

"Harry dead? What a question! No, Eleanor. I

saw Harry yesterday, as well as ever, and very gay and cheery."

"Then what has happened? Is he ill? Has there been an accident?"

"That's what we do not know. Nobody has seen him since nine o'clock yesterday morning."

"You seem to have made a mystery to very little purpose," said Eleanor haughtily. "No doubt my husband wished to give me a surprise and has gone to Clivedon by train. Have you telegraphed to find out?"

"We have telegraphed, but have ascertained nothing. Here we are, and here's Mattie. She said to bring you to our house. Why did she come here?"

"You said that, Donald," said Mattie, "I knew Eleanor would come straight home, so I slipped around to meet her. Max has taken his sisters to our house. Eleanor dear, come and have a cup of tea. You look white and faint."

Mrs. Lee came forward and drew Eleanor into her arms.

"Oh, mother," she cried, "what can it mean? What has happened to my husband?"

"I hope nothing serious, dearest. But don't break down, you may need your strength."

"I shall not break down, I am not going to faint."

She drank the tea that Mattie poured, and then ate bread and butter. Though people's souls are on the rack of anxiety and their hearts breaking, cups of tea and plates of bread and butter will be offered them to the end of time.

"I thank you so much for coming to meet me," she said to Donald. "Now I'll go and see my little

tired boy to his bed. Mother, have you searched my desk and room? Did Harry leave any note for me?"

"Not a scrap of paper, Eleanor."

At the door she turned with her hand on the knob, and looked searchingly at Donald Waugh. The man's face was leonine as ever, though the red hair was sprinkled with gray. The shrewd eyes answered hers from a pent house of shaggy overhanging brows.

"Donald, do you know of any reason why Harry should run away? Is there any occasion for it? Be frank with me for old friendship's sake."

"On my honor, Eleanor, there is no reason."

"So I would have sworn. Then I am to blame, for having deserted my post. I should not have left him for a single day."

"My child," pleaded her mother, "don't speak so. Don't be morbid. You have done right, always right, my child."

"God knows," sighed Eleanor.

She went up-stairs and undressed her boy herself, putting him to bed in his crib, even singing to him. When he was fast asleep she still lingered, holding close the dimpled hand.

What was it she feared? She literally did not know. The thing that had terrified her, weeks before, when Harry was on the brink of nervous exhaustion, had receded; it had been to her thought safe to leave him. He was again absorbed in his work, and perfectly normal.

When she came down to dinner, a man in the uniform of a captain of police came forward to meet her.

She recognized him at once. He had been a soldier in Harry's company in the old war days.

"Why, Tom Meredith!" she exclaimed.

"Mr. Waugh sent the captain's description to headquarters, but said that nothing was to get into the papers. I came around to see if I could be of service. Captain Osbourn had no enemies?"

"None that we know of."

"Did he make any during the strike?"

"I can testify that he did not," said Donald emphatically.

"Was he in the habit of carrying much money?"

"No," replied Eleanor.

"Can you ascertain what money he had when he left home?"

"Probably yes, by inquiry at the bank to-morrow."

The police captain hesitated. His next question, in a very low voice, was not meant to be audible to Eleanor. Nevertheless she heard it, and responded.

"Was he possibly interested in any one beside his wife?"

"For shame, Tom Meredith!" exclaimed Eleanor. "You to ask that! You should know your old captain better."

The policeman looked embarrassed.

Donald Waugh smiled confidently.

"Don't take up that theory, Meredith. There's nothing in it. My only fear is that Mr. Osbourn has become temporarily insane."

Graven on Eleanor's mind as with the point of a diamond were the days and nights that followed. Dora and Clemmie Pomfret having once known an

experience not unlike hers, forgot their own sorrow in supporting her. Mrs. Lee and Kathleen left their home to stay in the house of suspense. Everything went on as usual, except that the veil of an impenetrable silence had dropped between Harry Osbourn and his home.

Had any one foretold that to Eleanor should come this special form of keen torture, the wearing anxiety of prolonged suspense, with no reason to justify it, she would have scouted the idea. Nor could any one have predicted that she would bear it as she did; patiently, perseveringly, bravely following every offered clue, refusing to give up hope, and, after a little, wearing a face that if not bright was at least calm, and strong.

"Your sister is the most extraordinary woman I ever saw," said Dick Deland to Kathleen. "I'll tell you what I think. You know Harry had a slight sunstroke the year before they came back to Islington?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"It may have left some sequence, that none of us have thought of. Dr. Abbott wrote me that he believed that it might be accountable for this. Harry *may* have been hurt, and have forgotten his own identity. Or, he *may* be just a little off his balance."

"If he is in his right mind, and he's letting Eleanor suffer as she does, I, for one, shall never speak to him again."

"The worst of it is," said poor Dick ruefully, "it is putting off our wedding. But, sweetheart, do you believe we ought to wait indefinitely, now that we *may* marry when we choose?"

"My dear Dick, what would Eleanor say if we broke in on her sorrow with wedding bells?"

"Let's ask your mother."

They did. To their surprise, Mrs. Lee agreed with Dick, that obstacles having been removed, Kathleen and he should wait no longer.

Dick's people had been a drag on him. His parents had required his help. He had been working strenuously to support his brothers and sisters and educate them. For him, the strain was now over, and as his engagement and Kathleen's had already been a long one, Mrs. Lee was unwilling to let it continue longer. The wedding was very quiet, but Eleanor attended it, carrying herself with a fortitude that was queenly.

As the newly-married pair stepped into the carriage that was to convey them to the train for their wedding journey, Dick whispered something to Eleanor.

"Perhaps," she said. The suggestion was to make a thorough search of the little hamlet in Ohio, where Harry Osbourn had grown up. His family had long since died, or moved away, few people in the place would remember him, yet Dick felt that he might be hiding there. They had looked everywhere else.

Eleanor went home to her lonely house and laid aside her rich gown, folding it with care. Her heart was very sore, yet she tried to be glad that Kathleen's happy day had come. The temptation to fear, even for Kathleen, was a sharp one, but Eleanor resolved bravely, then and there, that no grief of hers should ever make her hard or skeptical, as to the truth and joy in the world, or take from her the habit of sympathy. God helping her, she would trample sorrow under her feet, except when only God could see.

XXXI

THY GOLD TO REFINE

EVERY possible inquiry as to Harry Osbourn's disappearance from his usual haunts had of course been made. At home the servants declared that he had breakfasted in the ordinary leisurely manner, read his morning paper and gone out as usual, with nothing at all differing from the course he always pursued. The office people confirmed the impression thus made of his having been altogether himself, and the judge before whom he had last appeared in an inquiry of some importance, emphasized the statement that in his opinion, the man had been perfectly poised and mentally clear. That was conclusive testimony as to the day before.

Some weeks after Eleanor's return, a gentleman called on her, whose voice and manner were vaguely familiar, touching some far away note of association, although it was so faint and evanescent a note, that she tried to dismiss it from her mind as she conversed with the white haired stranger, a man whose erect figure time had not bent, whose dark eyes time had not dimmed.

After a little talk, he said with a certain hesitation, "Mrs. Osbourn, it seems to be my fate to be mixed up with the chief sorrows of your life. I am the man who came years ago, from Aldis, to tell you of your father's death."

"Ah!" exclaimed Eleanor. "I remember you now."

"I may explain that I am an old acquaintance of your husband's family, and that I have known him from boyhood. A short time after he vanished from Islington he called on me in Aldis; he said that he was passing northward on business, and mentioned that you were in the South. It was then I learned that he had married Judge Lee's daughter."

"Did Harry seem troubled, or in any way strange?"

"Not in the least. And he was well provided with money. He took pains to let me see a large roll of bills. This is all I can tell you."

The strange visitor withdrew, and Eleanor realized that for the second time she had encountered him, and he had not given her his name. He had this time brought a little comfort, being the first person who had conveyed tangible evidence that Harry was alive and going somewhere of his own volition, some hours after Islington's dust had been shaken from his feet.

In later years Eleanor Osbourn was wont to say that the experiences of this critical time on which she had entered divided her life into two continents with a gulf between. Outwardly she governed herself so well that some thought her cold, and others did not suspect how great was the strain her mentality endured. The words of Dick Deland at the train made a very slight ripple in her thought, as she knew that Harry had few recollections of childhood strong enough to draw him back to the bare little Ohio village which he had never greatly loved. Dick

and Kathleen, having all America in which to choose the objective point of their wedding journey, selected the small unromantic spot which had been Harry's birthplace, and spent a happy honeymoon there, in an environment different from any they had ever known. They found no trace of the fugitive, yet did not regret their own course.

Eleanor, while patiently extending her researches in every direction, resolved to take up her small daily duties as if nothing had happened and to preserve her health for Lee's sake and her mother's. Little Lee, too young to understand any lack was the greatest possible comfort and next to him were those two babes in the woods, Miss Clemmie and Miss Dora, who settled down into the novel routine of Northern life, with a positive pleasure, that the sadness of the home did not suffice to chill.

Waiting time is never easy time. When one bears it with tears and idle hands and listless longing for coming days and half-hearted hopes, it eats into the very secrets of vitality, like a corroding rust. Once before Eleanor had waited for tidings, but it was another waiting now. Then she was buoyed up by a great occasion; her sorrow wore the purple of royalty; many another woman was in like case with herself; if her husband were never heard from, his name would be inscribed on his country's roll of deathless honor. Then she was young, intolerant of pain, torn by an anguish that derided consolation. Now she was older, she had been tried in the fire of varied suffering; her faith had grown deeper and stronger. This new grief was robed in ashen gray —there was no reason that man could see for its

coming. Eleanor felt the hand of God heavy upon her. Nevertheless she made careful toilettes day by day, she went out as usual in all weathers, she visited the sick, and devoted herself more than ever to her mother, whose eyes were almost blind, and who needed some one's ministrations. Eleanor read many hours of every week to Mrs. Lee, history, poetry and stories, chatting with her of the events of the time as related in the press, and deliberately stepping outside herself, that she might make sunshine for others. Here was the true philosophy, better than mere resignation or plaintive acquiescence. She met and faced each day's sharp access of loneliness and pain with an indomitable courage.

The Hall of Rest under Miss Rachel's motherly management was by this time, the real social centre of Old Field Hollow. After the strike, the privations of the women and children had led them to seek relief at the hall, and Miss Rachel had found herself at the head of an informal cooking and sewing school. Under her management the hall grew into something like an old-fashioned home, with a small h, and bustling personage though she might be, she never found fault with tired women who came there to sit with folded hands.

From the first she was certain that Harry's absence would be somehow explained, and that he would return, and her sunny optimism did much to save those interested from morbidness. When Eleanor with the resolutely restrained pain in her face, hidden under a smile, came in to teach the Bible class she had again gathered about her, or to sing at one of the little evening services, Miss Rachel's true heart

was glad and proud; she loved strength in man or woman, most of all in woman.

The puzzling, baffling, almost maddening thing to every one was the complete absence of motive. Why had Harry gone? As time passed the mystery deepened. It settled down on Eleanor like a dead weight for all her bravery, and long after others ceased to speak of it, she scanned newspapers, visited almshouses, hospitals, and morgues, and started at a sudden noise, as if a cold hand had been laid on her shoulder.

Donald Waugh was filled with anger at the man who could thus try a woman's spirit.

"He has deliberately crushed her under the most tormenting anxiety a wife can suffer," he said, "and for no reason under heaven."

"Never, if Harry were himself, would he have done such a thing," said Mattie. "Eleanor loves him still and trusts him, so why do you vex yourself so much? I think it is unlike you, Donald."

The man did not continue the subject. His wife did.

"You are exactly like old Mrs. O'Halligan when little Tim was lost. So long as they thought the child was drowned or run over on the railroad, she wept and wrung her hands, but when Tim was found and brought home, she was furious and shook him till he couldn't speak. That's what you would do."

"I know that kind of temper," laughed Donald. "It has a good deal of human nature in it, Mattie. But Harry is not here, so your parallel is not justified."

"Harry will be found and I for one, shall give him a warm welcome home yet. Meanwhile Eleanor is growing more than ever in sweetness; I could almost call her saintly, except that I don't as a rule like saints; they are generally too well aware of their claim to the honor."

Dick and Kathleen were back, and in the buoyancy of their new estate, they refused to let Eleanor mope. They were in and out of her house every day, and when at last the two little old ladies went home to Virginia again, Kathleen spent a part of each day with her sister.

She was rummaging one afternoon in a secretary that had belonged to her father, and chanced upon a seldom opened drawer. She uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Why Nellie!"

"What is it, Kathleen?"

"Look here."

Eleanor looked, and looked again. Then, with a cry that came from the depths of her soul, she snatched a thick parcel, directed to herself in Harry's hand. Her first tumultuous regret was that it must have lain there, all these dreadful weeks, and that had she but searched, she would have had a message from the absent one. She sank into a chair, white to the lips, but her color returned presently, and Kathleen, divining that she preferred to be alone, went out of the room.

XXXII

THE PACKET KATHLEEN FOUND

"**M**Y darling wife," began the letter which Eleanor opened with trembling fingers. It bore a date twelve months back of the day when it was discovered. "I am half concealing something in this drawer in the hope that I may burn it, and that your eyes may never fall on the lines I write. There are days and days when I feel that you never need read this letter. Other days come when I am not so sure. I am haunted by a persistent presentiment that something is going to happen to me. At times it is so great a dread that I hate to be alone, and shrink from my own company. Again, I fear to turn a corner lest some one shall suddenly spring out and pull me down, and yet, again, I am beside myself lest we shall all land in some awful catastrophe. This possession of terror is not new. I have had it ever since the days we lived in the beautiful South, where the roses were so sweet, and the walls were so thick around the garden, and you and I suffered so much together, and yet, were often so happy. I was a brave man once, Eleanor dear, but now I am a coward. There is in my mind a firm conviction that you would get on far better without me. You are surrounded by real and lifelong friends. You have the boy. Your family are around you, and you have immense courage and are full of resource. I am

nothing but a millstone round your neck. Without me, you would strike out some splendid line, and follow it; I handicap you. I might as well relieve you of the weight I am, not by dying, I shall never commit the sin of suicide, but by withdrawal, where none can find me, only begging you to forget and forgive one who has never been worthy of the woman who gave him her love.

"I am dead tired, Eleanor, tired of everything I am doing, tired of law books and cases, and money and work. I want to get into the open. If another war had come, that would have given me an opportunity, but the signs are of peace. I am leaving you with a good provision. My will and a schedule of our effects are in this packet. See that my boy hears nothing bad of his father, Eleanor, and if possible send him to college.

"You will be asking has there been insanity in the Osbourn family, if you ever do read this. I may, you see, get all right, and you will then never suspect what I am trying to tell you. I answer no, I am the first, if I am insane, which I doubt. I am, I believe before God, fully responsible for all I do and think and plan. If only God would help me! But He does not. I've asked Him, and He has given me up. No use looking to Him any longer."

The letter was long, rambling, and incoherent, but it was Harry's and it threw light on some darkness. Poor Harry! Eleanor sent it by mail to Dr. Abbott. She had a quiet sense of dependence on the good physician who was so much her friend. He confirmed her in the feeling that Harry had had spells of moodiness and struggle, due, in part, to the strain he

had undergone in the war days; due, in a larger part, to the physical inroads and mental shocks of the most undermining appetite known to man. The habit had been abandoned, but the effects had remained. One sentence to the doctor's mind was full of hope. The longing for the open, for the life of hard toil, away from men and women whom he knew, for a complete change, seemed to the doctor to present a gleam of brightness. To be sure, a man in his senses would not have sought this furtively, nor edged away like a fleeing culprit, but here was the twist, that had been too much for him. Dr. Abbott ended by declaring that she must be of good heart: she would soon hear from Harry, or he would return when least expected. In the meantime he concluded by saying, "Emilie is praying for you, Mrs. Osbourn, and Emilie's prayers have access in the court of her King."

"Never speak of him to me again!" said Donald Waugh, and Mrs. Lee echoed the sentiment. To them, the letter and the report of the gentleman from Aldis, were, alike, proofs of Harry's cruelty. What could Eleanor want of such a husband? He might better stay away.

"How you can go on loving him," her mother said, "passes my comprehension. Your father was a prince among men. In our married life, he was always tender, thoughtful, just, considerate. He stood between me and the world. I never had a wish that he divined and refused to gratify. I was surrounded by his constant attentions. Here are you, poor child, who have been the plaything of a strange destiny, who have gone through scenes and sorrows that

might have killed a dozen women. Yet you cling to Harry Osbourn still. Could anything destroy your love?"

"Nothing," was Eleanor's answer. "I am Harry's wife. I love him just as he is, wherever he is, and whatever he is, better than I could love any other man in the world, and I shall love him, until my last breath. My love shall find and save him yet."

"He may be where you cannot reach him, dear."

"I shall find and save him yet."

"My child, I cannot think of it as in character with your husband, but such things have been, as that a man may have yielded to some temptation which assailed him in a weak moment: the passion for gambling, perhaps, or some grosser form of vice. Human nature is a frail reed, and every child of Adam is so burdened by inherited traits and tendencies that he may be like a chip freighted with the desires and weaknesses of those who have gone before, and at the mercy of circumstance. If I knew the whole genealogy of the Osbourns, as I do our own family tree, I should be happier in my mind."

"This way of talking, mother dear, is not a bit like you. I know Harry; what do I care for his grandfather? I repeat that I have confidence in him, but, were my confidence vain, I would just love him more fully, with more compassion, but with equal love. Nothing can make me change a fraction in my regard for Harry. Why, mother, he is my husband. That is the answer to everything any one can say."

Mrs. Lee stooped and kissed Eleanor, who was sitting in a low chair, her hands moving softly to and fro in the meshes of some white wool work.

"Are you ever a moment idle, dear?" she asked.
"What are you making now?"

"When it's completed, it's to be a shawl for somebody I love," answered Eleanor. "Mother, I have to be busy; when I am not busy I brood. I can never be thankful enough that when I was a little girl, you taught me to sew and crochet and knit. You used to tell me 'Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do.'"

Women who have the accomplishment of needle-craft, whatever its variety, have a gift which they should not undervalue. The needle in a woman's hand is often a sedative for clamorous nerves, or a shield against oppressive care. In olden days, before our girls were so liberally educated as now, they were taught the art of plain sewing, and the intricacies of embroidery, and with one long white seam, or the flashing steel knitting needle, they tided over some of the harder experiences of life. Education, in whatsoever field it lie, is for discipline and culture more than for mere information, and therefore the training of the hands is not to be despised.

Little Lee, when he said his nightly prayers, never omitted "God bless dear father!" One evening he looked up into his mother's face, his eyes shining, his rosy lips parted.

"Do you s'pose father says, 'God bless dear Lee'?" he asked.

"Yes, darling, I am sure father says that, I am sure of it."

"I wis' father'd come home to you and me," said the child. "But he isn't vewy far off, if he says that."

And Eleanor, kneeling by her boy, was suddenly comforted. What she had told him stole into her heart as a blessed assurance. She fell asleep that night, saying to herself,

“God be with you till we meet again,
Till we meet, at Jesus’ feet.”

Which does not necessarily mean, as some of us think, till we meet in Heaven! There are meetings here at Jesus’ feet, and from them come more results than this world dreams of.

The mother who takes care of her own little ones, in the unfolding years of their early life, receives compensation, pressed down and running over for her work and care. Children are our truest comforters, and from their little lips drop words of wisdom which they speak in their perfect unconsciousness of the evil abroad in the world. “Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

XXXIII

UNDER THE SHOULDER OF THE HILL

WHEN Harry Osbourn obeyed the overmastering vagrant impulse that had for months tugged at his brain, and urged him to go away, somewhere, anywhere, beyond the pale of his home and friends, his good angel must have been asleep. He had worked late at the office, two hours, at least, after the rest had left and gone home for the day, and night had crept on, a chill, rain-swept night. As he stepped into the street, where the gas lamp flickered fitfully over the slate colored, soaking sidewalk, with the single strip of stone down the centre, his feet squashed into mud and water, and a sharp gale, turning the corner, whipped its sleety points against his face. Fighting the wind, he stood waiting for the car that went in the direction of his own house. Three cars passed, going the other way. When a fourth came, he stepped into it, with no special aim beyond an automatic movement to get under shelter.

"There's nobody at home. I won't be missed if I don't go there yet," was his first thought. Little did he dream that this was a suggestion of his evil genius, that it meant the first step on a way that he had long contemplated, toying with the idea, yet with no definite intention of carrying it into action. After he had written his queer letter to Eleanor, and had hid-

den it away, he seemed to have crossed the danger line, and from that time, for many weeks, the temptation had not troubled him. He had, in fact, forgotten that letter as completely as if it had never been written. The car stopped at a big, well-lighted, railway station, its terminus, and Harry stepped out with the other passengers. He went into the railway restaurant and ordered a meal. Soup, meat, coffee, were brought, and, being hungry, he ate heartily and with enjoyment. As he finished, a man, whom he did not recognize, came to the table, holding out his hand.

"Captain Osbourn, as I live and breathe. If ever I was glad to see any one on earth, old fellow, I'm glad to see you. Are you on the road? I'm going on the north-bound train myself. I hope we're to be fellow-travellers."

"I'm going to Aldis, Major Bond," Harry heard his own voice saying. "The window's open, I see. I'll just get my ticket, and then I'll join you in a talk over old times."

Comrades in the Civil War, sharers of its hardships and perils, the two men had once been congenial friends. Major Bond invited Harry to drink with him. Harry declined, rather to the Major's wonder, but the matter was not pressed. They boarded a train together, and for fifty miles, talked as eagerly and vehemently as if they had been boys instead of middle-aged men, over the campaigns that were to be history for the children of the next generation. Major Bond bade his friend good-bye, when he arrived at Aldis, and proceeded on his own journey, which took him beyond daily papers and telegrams.

Consequently, when Harry was chronicled as missing the Major never knew it. At Aldis, Harry sought a little inn he had frequented in boyhood, and asking for a room, was shown up to one he remembered. A maple-wood bedstead, with a billowy feather bed, a washstand with white pitcher and basin, a rocking-chair and a straight backed chair, a looking-glass, a small bureau, and a strip of home-made rag carpet on the floor completed the simple furnishings. The skimpy allowance of huckaback towels, and the skimpy towels themselves, the hard white soap streaked with red, the lamp with a bit of red worsted in its clear bowl, winding serpent-wise amid the kerosene, all were as familiar to him as the memories of his boyhood. In such a room he had often slept in younger days. He had once fancied such a room rather grand than humble. In the morning, a loud bell clangng through the halls wakened him, and he dressed and descended to a smoking breakfast in the country style, ham and fried eggs, buckwheat cakes, coffee, with pie and doughnuts for those who wished a more extensive bill of fare. The people in the house were, as it happened, all men: some employed in Aldis, others commercial travellers, going out with their samples. One of the latter asked Harry what his particular line was.

"I am travelling for pleasure," said Harry, and the other looked at him with envy.

"Well," said he, "when a man has a wife and two or three kids, he can't go far for pleasure. He's compelled to work. He can't often go anywhere just for pleasure."

"No," agreed Harry, "he can't."

Yet no thought of Eleanor or of Lee appealed to him then. It was as if his mind were a surface from which, for the time, their names had been washed. He sauntered out, renewed acquaintance with old landmarks, and, seeing on a door the name of a law firm he had once known well, went in and called. Here was the Aldis lawyer, who later went to Eleanor, as he had gone earlier, to be the bearer of tidings. Elbert Coles had known Harry's people, and was glad to see Harry, though being acute by disposition and training, he wondered at the vagueness of his plans, and the absence of fixed purpose that his words implied. Of mental aberration, Harry's bearing gave no sign.

The border-land between sanity and its opposite is often nearer the mentally normal person than friends imagine. A slight divergence from perfect health, a protracted season of overwork, or sometimes a sudden shock, may precipitate disease. That nature, ever tending to cure her own hurts, often relieves and soothes, and sends restoration, is another blessed fact. Her winds breathe balm, her skies brood benignantly, her woods and groves, her rivers and oceans, have spells to weave in sweetness of remedial help, when overstrained humanity is in need. The rush and pressure of modern life are fearful, and at times we all suffer because serenity and calm leisure are gone, now that steam and electricity have abolished distance, and done away with space limitations. Indeed, the real mystery is not that any one can be discovered, but that any one can be successfully lost in this day of revelation. A generation ago, agencies for discovery were less numerous than now, but even

then, they were multiplied, and it was a marvel, indeed, that Harry Osbourn was not immediately found.

Leaving Aldis, he took a north-bound train, idly still, not caring whither he went. Nightfall found him in a nook of the mountains, and heedless of the inconvenience of no luggage, he again sought shelter in an obscure country tavern. A man's actual necessities are minimized when he becomes in a measure indifferent to artificial wants, or luxuries, and this man bought an extra shirt or two, an extra set of underclothing, a pocket comb and a tooth brush, at the village store, and was sufficiently equipped for the time. He lingered here several days, paying his bill at each day's end, and strolling aimlessly about, or sleeping for hours as he pleased. Then, penetrating farther into the wilderness, he asked, in the guise of a travelling artist, for board at a farmhouse under the shoulder of a great hill. The farmer and his wife were incurious people, who were not averse to taking in a guest with money to spare. They asked no questions, and had no near neighbors who might gossip. Harry stayed in their house for many months, then left, wending his steps next to a small village, nearer Islington, rather than farther from it, though in an indirect line. He simply drifted on, irresponsibly.

While under the hill's shadow, the man had vegetated, rested, begun to be interested in the life about him. One day he awakened and remembered, and came to himself. That night, in an agony, he prayed for Eleanor and little Lee. But he was ashamed to go home. He counted his money. It was almost gone. He decided to work his way back, somehow, to Is-

lington, and, if need be, at the last, to walk back there. But how could he ever meet Eleanor? He was not yet wholly himself or he would not have been afraid. In this strange and timorous mood, he stopped at a village in the Adirondack foothills, and engaged with a rural doctor to do chores, and drive the horses, and be a general man of all work. In this novel capacity of hired man he became extremely useful, proving that a well-trained mind in any field gives a man a great advantage over one who lacks intellectual discipline. "Henry," as he was called here, was a very treasure of hired men, but here he aroused curiosity. The doctor's wife and daughter were keenly aware that the new workman was a gentleman, though he ate in the kitchen and slept in the loft.

"I do hope, doctor," said the wife, "that Henry won't turn out to be an escaped convict."

"Nonsense, Frances, don't be fanciful. Henry's a plain American, a little down on his luck, that's all."

"He looks awfully sorrowful, father," said the doctor's daughter.

"Please select a less lurid adverb, Irene. There's nothing awful about Henry. I'm only afraid he won't stay long. For pity's sake, child, don't invest him with a halo of romance. If he were not such a silent chap, I'd find out more about him, but he doesn't talk, and thus far, I don't even know his surname. He has a knack with horses which is the principal necessity in his present position."

The doctor went to his patients. Irene speculated in vain.

XXXIV

A HOMESICK HEART

HARD work is an antidote for many evils, but it cannot cure the hurt of a homesick heart, nor can it bring entire forgetfulness. In the loft-chamber where Harry now slept, the family had a custom of stowing away in piles and heaps, when they became an embarrassment in the living rooms, newspapers and periodicals, which they had read. As a clever and wide-awake household, they took in a good deal of printed matter, and there was a theory, that Irene and her mother sent off the papers they had finished reading, to the Salvation Army headquarters, or the hospital, or the cousin in Kansas, or the home missionary in Nebraska. About once a year, after a sermon on the practical way of showing love to the neighbor, they really did put up and mail a good deal of their left over reading matter to those who hailed it as a boon or a welcome diversion, but they seldom kept regularly on. The result was that sheaves of papers gathered dust in the library and choked the sitting-room, until Irene, in despair, carried them up to the loft-chamber and bestowed them in a dark corner.

During his country sojourn, Harry Osbourn had read little. The hunger for books that had marked his earlier life was then in abeyance. While toiling as Dr. Mott's hired man, the old love for books re-

turned, as quietly as it had vanished, and asserted itself imperiously. He could not well borrow volumes from the library, and in the kitchen the only literature accessible consisted of an almanac, three cookery books, and an old blue-backed Webster's speller, which were hobnobbing in a friendly intimacy on the shelf below the eight day clock. When Harry Osbourn, poking under the rafters, came upon the great piles of newspapers and magazines, he was as happy as a miner who has found a vein of silver.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated. "Here's something to read!"

Of course, among the first paragraphs on which he chanced, in the *Islington Mail and Express* of some months ago, was a description of himself and an advertisement; other papers revealed other advertisements, and he read, with a shaking hand and a sinking heart, of the efforts his people had made to discover him and his whereabouts. The enormity of his continued hiding, now that he was in a measure Harry Osbourn, and not some masquerading stranger in Harry's outward semblance was clearly forced upon his consciousness.

"What in the world has my wife done all these weary days and nights?" he cried in utter abasement, grinding his teeth, and closing his hands till they ached, and the nails almost cut the hardened palms.

He fell on his knees, and, like the man in the parable, smote his breast, crying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner! God bless Eleanor! God bless my boy, my boy, and let me go home to them."

In pitiful anticlimax at the moment rang out Dr.

Mott's "Hello, Henry, where are you? Come and take my horse!"

That homesick heart could brook no more delay. Henry finished his evening chores, tied up his bundle, and gave the astonished employer an hour's notice.

"Man!" remonstrated the physician. "You are mad. You can't leave me in this ridiculous way, without the ghost of an idea where I'll find your successor. I shan't soon find your equal. Is it more wages you want, my friend? Name your terms."

"I reckon, doctor," said Harry, "that you've paid me full value for my services. I've been satisfied. I *have* been mad, I'm afraid, but I'm sane now, and I'm needed somewhere else. Doctor, don't hinder me, for Christ's sake; I'm going home where I belong."

"Tell me who you are," said the doctor, fixing piercing eyes on his face.

"Not now. I will tell you sometime."

"Are you a fugitive from the law?"

"No, on my word of honor. I have been a fugitive from home, though, and I'm going back."

"Then may God bless you!" said the doctor, grasping the hand of his hired man in a hearty clasp.

At midnight Harry was on the train, that a day later would land him in Islington.

He sat well back in a corner near one end of the car, his heart thumping with excitement, as the express thundered on, every swift revolution of the wheels bringing him nearer the dear ones he had left. Absorbed in his deep penitence, his eager wish to see them again, he wasted no emotion in fear as to his reception. Without words he was sure of forgive-

ness from those in the home, and as for others, he had no care. What they might think was to him a matter of little moment. It was a trifle singular that he felt scarcely any remorse. To his own apprehension, he had been the sport of circumstances, or of caprice, and, equally it did not occur to him, that what had once happened might happen again. Over and over, he kept repeating under his breath in an exultant tone,

“I’m on the road home! I’m on the road home!”

There was a crash. The locomotive jumped the rails. Two forward cars lay on their sides. Passengers in the rear car, where Harry was, made their way outdoors, unhurt, and directly it was known that nobody on board was killed, though some were bruised, and badly shaken, and the engineer, poor fellow, was painfully scalded. Rain was falling in torrents and cascades, reminding Harry of the night when he left home. The whip of the rain in his face, as he tramped through black mud to the station brought vividly back that other night when he had gone away.

“Oh! God!” he murmured, “hast Thou forgiveness for a fool?” For the first time he saw himself, colossally, ignominiously, unpardonably, a fool, and the extenuations of his physical condition at the time faded away. He tottered into the station in the gray dawn, overwhelmed with the revelation that the last half hour had brought, not of his sinfulness, but of his folly.

“What will Eleanor say?” he thought in bitter self-reproach.

The train was delayed three hours. In his impa-

tience they seemed to Harry Osbourn three weeks, for now he was straining to reach his journey's end, and could brook no delay. People paced up and down, eager as himself; some, rendering thanks for a great escape were patient; others, like Harry, were counting the dragging minutes, that they might start again, yet they might have been stranded in a worse place. Here there were a good many alleviations.

XXXV

WHAT ELEANOR SAID

THREE hours' delay at a wayside station, which was the terminal of several branch roads, and past which great trains going north to Canada and south to the Gulf flashed at intervals all day long, was not quite so bad as might have been the same length of waiting in a desert place. Harry, feeling faint, at last refreshed himself in the railway restaurant, ate a warm breakfast, and then, in the most commonplace way possible bought an early Islington paper, and sat down to read it.

Passengers were coming and going. Railway guards in uniform stood here and there. Arriving and departing trains were announced by stentorian voices. Harry stopped to ascertain when his train would start.

A tall woman in a dark rain-coat was walking up and down the platform. She led a child by the hand. An air of distinction about her, a certain familiar grace in her walk, caught Harry's eye, and his heart stood still. The instinct that saves the modern man from making a scene, or becoming a spectacle, enabled him to control himself, and, pale as death, he stood braced against a post, till he had himself in hand.

Up and down, up and down, walked the lady, careless of her surroundings, unheeding the eyes of the lonely man, that devoured her with their glances.

The station had gradually become deserted, the chill of the morning driving most of the waiting passengers into the large stove-heated rooms. Presently the little fellow spoke.

"Mother, dear, let us go and sit down somewhere, please!"

"In a minute, Lee. Not quite yet, darling! Mother likes the air!"

Oh! the sweet ring of that soft voice, as the waiting man heard it.

Harry stepped up to the pair, hat in hand. Bare-headed, he waited for the princess to speak his sentence. Not stopping to think that his sudden apparition might upset her composure, and distress her beyond her strength in a public place, not waiting for anything, he barred her pathway. Little Lee uttered a glad cry, "Papa, it's my papa."

"Eleanor!"

"Why, Harry!" she answered. "Why, Harry. Are you coming home?"

"Yes, Eleanor. May I?"

She slipped her hand into his.

"Yes, Harry!" she said, but the lovelight in her eyes was as bright as sunshine breaking through mist. Yet nothing could have been more natural than this dramatic meeting.

Eleanor and her boy had been away on a visit to some old acquaintances of the Lees. They had been on the train *with* Harry, and the accident brought them together. At noon, when the train pulled into Islington, husband, wife and child alighted, and as if he had never been absent, Harry Osbourn came home.

The old comfort, the old cheer, the old elegance of appointment in rooms and at the table, the rugs so soft to the foot, the pictures on the walls, the books, ah, the dear books in the library, nothing of home was changed when the wanderer returned. As formerly, white-capped maids went noiselessly to and fro. As formerly, the household moved in grooves so smooth, that there was no friction. Max Pomfret, of a different and far less sensitive nature, had gone from his world at his pleasure and returned at his will, and later on Harry Osbourn recognized the suggestion of his own going, as having sprung from that unfortunate example, but Max, when he went away, or came back, had been oblivious of any one's position except his own. Harry Osbourn did not fit as easily as he had fancied or without real suffering into the place that had once been his. He imagined that people stared at him, as indeed at first they did. He was sure the servants discussed him below stairs, which probably was the case. It required an immense amount of fortitude and courage for him to go about again in Islington, and to receive kith and kin and friends in his own home. If Eleanor had not stood unflinchingly at his side, he must have broken down. Never had she been Princess Eleanor more truly than at this most trying period of her history.

What is done in this world can never be wholly undone. The man who voluntarily severs the ties that bind him to his own place, his own work, and his own people, need never expect that he can rebind them, and the knot show no roughness. The thing is simply abhorrent to the order of nature and therefore impossible. In Harry's absence, Eleanor had

acquired an inevitable independence and a degree of sufficiency to herself. She could stand lovingly at his side, loyal, devoted and steadfast, but she could not relinquish the right to do as she chose in small as in great things, which had become hers by Harry's voluntary act. She had formed certain habits of independent decision and action which she could never lose. That her husband had not been entirely responsible only deepened in her the strain of motherhood, which thereafter kept even pace with wisely tenderness in her love for him all her days.

Little Lee became the father's comforter. The child was companionable, a playmate, a delight, and in his eyes Harry read no reproach. Do what he could, and what she would, the shadow of an unspoken reproach was in Eleanor's face. The whole catastrophe had been so needless; it seemed meaningless, now that it was over, but it had left a scar.

Donald Waugh was among the first to call, and contrary to Eleanor's fears, was genial and cordial. Harry flushed and paled, as Donald's square gaze rested on him, and he had a little shyness in taking the big hand when it was extended in welcome. That Donald asked no questions was a relief to both Eleanor and Harry. As time passed, and there came from him no intimation that Harry's old position was again open to him, both husband and wife were somewhat aggrieved. Here however Donald held firmly aloof.

"I never take a rickety tool in my hand if I can help it," he observed to Mattie. "I'm done with that one."

"I think you might concede something for Eleanor's

sake," said Mattie. "You have always tried to help her through difficulties."

"Not for twenty Eleanors would I trust my business in Harry Osbourn's hands," said the man positively. "Business and sentiment are not good partners."

"Yet you made haste to employ Max Pomfret at a similar time."

"I beg your pardon, my dear. The point is not the same. Max is an inventor, a person apt to go off at a tangent: emphatically not a man to tie to. Max had neither wife nor child. Harry Osbourn was and is the husband of a woman of whom any man might be proud. He has treated her shamefully. If he knew what he was about, there is no excuse for him. If he did not there would be none for me, if I risked important concerns in his care. I purpose to look after Eleanor's affairs as faithfully as an old friend may, but of Harry I wash my hands. Besides, dear, don't call me hard, please, it will be better for him to climb the hill again without anybody as a staff to lean upon. Isn't this my little Lois coming home from school? Here, my precious, come and let father love you."

There was no hardness in Donald's face when Lois climbed upon his knee and laid her flower-face against his cheek.

Donald Waugh was right. The spur that Harry Osbourn was in need of was precisely this letting alone, which made it evident that if he ever won back his honorable place among men, he must do it by stubborn doggedness. After a few weeks, he opened a modest office on a corner of the main street, and

picked up a practice scanty at first, which gradually increased as men found him competent and faithful.

And daily, nightly, Eleanor surrounded him with an atmosphere of ceaseless gentleness, and deathless patience and wifely love.

XXXVI

IRENE'S DISCOVERY

"**M**OTHER! Mother! Come up here if you can!"

It was Irene Mott calling from the little room in the loft which Henry had occupied. Irene had gone up-stairs to see that it was in order, and was tying up the newspapers and generally disposing of the litter. One of this young woman's peculiarities was a love of reading, and the ruling passion often caught her in the toils, just as it did Eleanor Lee, just as it does every genuine lover of books. Old newspapers, dusty and yellow, back numbers of the magazines, and dingy volumes that had seen better days, were treasure trove to Irene, and she had lingered long in the loft, beguiled, not so much by the charm of news which was like the flow of water that is past, as by the stories, jests, and odd advertisements, in the sheets she was putting away.

Mrs. Mott, stout and elderly, panted up the steep ladder-like stairs.

"If you are not ill, Irene, you are very thoughtless," she said with an injured air as she reached the top, and looked in, rather exasperated at the sight of her daughter on the floor, sitting at her ease in the middle of a heap of what looked like rubbish, and beaming rosily over the spoils of this old trash. Mrs. Mott decided to make a bonfire of the stuff.

"I am sorry, mother. I should of course have gone to you. But I was so taken by surprise! Who do you suppose Henry is?"

"Henry? Why, he's Henry. I don't imagine him a foreign count or a prince in disguise."

"He's the husband of Eleanor Lee, the man who dropped down a hole, and never came up, oh! months ago, you surely remember?"

"Dropped down a hole?"

"Don't be so literal, dearest. I mean he disappeared strangely, and couldn't be traced, and we all were so distressed. Well, I've been reading these old papers, and putting one thing beside another, and now I know of a surety that our Henry is Harry Osbourn. I believe he's been reading too, and that reading about the thing restored him to his right mind, or at least fastened the loose screw, and so he's gone home. I shall telegraph to auntie in Islington this very day, in order to set my own mind at rest. Isn't it a little world, mother? A little, little world, where one is always meeting people one knows about in the most unexpected places. Think of Harry Osbourn, the brilliant advocate, the gallant soldier, the husband of Eleanor, grooming father's horses!"

"Don't be sure, too soon, Irene."

"I won't, but I'll telegraph auntie."

As if to emphasize Irene's assurance that this world of ours is a little place, for all its size, Dr. Mott brought an old classmate home to dinner that day, no less a person than Mr. Coles of Aldis. The doctor often brought guests to the table without previous notice, and the hospitality of the home was never strained by their coming. His wife had frequently

heard of Mr. Coles, but this, as it happened, was her first meeting with him. Mrs. Mott was quite upset by Irene's suspicions, and had to lie down in her room to stave off a nervous headache, before she could meet her family. She heard her husband's hearty laugh and the low tones of his friend in the office below her, and wondered what the doctor would say when he was told that a man fully their social equal had been eating in their kitchen. Irene came in with hot water to bathe her mother's face and the back of her neck.

"But, mother," she said coaxingly, "it wasn't your fault, nor ours; the man was evidently mentally a little astray. He didn't mind. I've no doubt it will all be right. Nobody can reflect on us. We had never had a peep at the poor fellow, so how could we suspect?"

Somewhat consoled, Mrs. Mott took her seat at her end of the dinner table. At the meal the talk turned on Irene's probable discovery. Mr. Coles considered that she had excellent grounds for her conclusion. He narrated what he had known of Judge Lee and his family, relating the story of the two occasions when he had met Eleanor, and describing Captain Osbourn minutely.

"How happens it that you know the Lees?" he inquired.

"Mrs. Lee and I were girls together at school, and we have been intimate friends all our lives," said Mrs. Mott. "My children call her auntie, though there is no real relationship, and hers address me in the same manner. Had Henry ever been in my room he would have seen his wife's picture on my dressing-

table. Indeed, though Eleanor has not been here for a long while, I had spoken to Irene of inviting her for a visit to divert her from her troubles. We were trying to arrange for it."

About the same hour, Eleanor learned in a talk with Harry, what he had been doing when away from her. She was speechless, so incredible it seemed that at any time during the last few weeks, she might have walked in upon the Motts, and have recognized her husband in their man of all work.

"You are not ashamed? You do not feel that this has disgraced me beyond rehabilitation?" Harry asked anxiously.

Eleanor smiled.

"Honest work can degrade nobody; you should know how I feel about that, dear. Only I wish Dr. Mott had known who you were. I could have had you at home so much sooner."

Eleanor had her small tilts with her mother. Mrs. Lee predicted that Harry could never regain anything of the intellectual power he had temporarily lost. She persisted in taking the gloomiest possible views, and when her friends spoke of her son-in-law, she shook her head. Nevertheless, she was mistaken. A new manhood invested him, and he had laid down forever a childish petulance and nervous weakness which had been his handicaps. Little by little he was climbing up, losing no foothold he gained, and conquering a place for himself in the community, a place securer and more worthy than he had ever possessed.

The prevalent opinion that in no circumstances may a man ever trample upon his past, and make it a stepping-stone to a better and nobler future, was

contradicted in the experience of Harry Osbourn. His wife held him to his best, not as formerly, by a studious and anxious endeavor to yield to his every caprice and to consult his every passing wish, but by going on her own way, at his side, filling her days with endeavor as important as his, and living her life in womanly beauty and strength as his comrade, not merely as his nurse and housekeeper, and the ornament of his life. Home was for Eleanor, in these days, a background where of old it had been only a battle-ground.

"You have kept on with all your work, you are again in your club, you have your Bible class as regularly as possible, you are full of outside interests," commented Mattie Waugh, "but it does not appear to hurt your home life, Eleanor. I should say, as an observer, that it was making it richer and fuller, and I do believe, though it contradicts my theories, that it is good for your husband."

"Mattie," Eleanor's face was alight with the intensity of her feeling, "I am contradicting my own theories. I have tried to be purely the domestic woman, but I am not fitted for her rôle. To be interesting I must be interested, and as I cannot squeeze my bushel into the pint measure of the woman who keeps house and does nothing else, I am dull and bored, and I bore others, when I am false to myself. I have faithfully tried two courses. The present course, which gives me room for expansion, which calls my powers into action, makes me a better wife to Harry and a better mother to Lee."

"Donald is afraid you are going back on what he calls the simplicity of womanhood. He rather de-

plores a change he sees in you, Eleanor. You know how he clings to the old ideals."

"So do I," retorted Eleanor. "I have not deserted my ideals. One would fancy I had done some astonishing, unprecedented thing, in trying to live my life as the Lord gives it to me. You see how it suits my husband. Did you ever see him looking half so well? But I can't expect Donald to understand."

Mattie drew herself up with some offense. Pride was always rather droll when shown by the little partridge of a woman who was so meek a mate to her rugged spouse. She had grown ample and stout with the years, but she ruffled up her feathers, as she said hastily,

"You never in your life understood my Donald, and you never will, but there isn't a man in Islington that I think fit to tie the latchet of his shoe."

"Pardon me, Mattie. I did not mean to be disrespectful. Everybody knows the solid goodness of Donald Waugh."

Mattie was conciliated. She had matured into one of the easy-going, amiable women who have few angles, and are as reposeful as pillows to those with whom they live. An ingrained loyalty to her traditions, a habit of adopting her husband's ideas about everything from politics to parasols, and a sort of soft obstinacy about trifles, had deepened and grown in Mattie, until she was impervious to new notions of any kind. Mattie's gentle insistence upon trifles was at times disconcerting; she was not exactly Donald's echo, but she gave him a continual worship which was delightful to his vanity, and was accepted as his due by the good man, who still, with a little incon-

sistency, looked down upon Mattie's intellect. Lois would stir things up yet in the still pool of the Waughs' domesticity, but that period was fortunately far off. She was now a thin, impulsive, intense child, who had outgrown her baby prettiness, and was awkward and clumsy. She loved her mother, adored her father, and thought her little playmate, Lee, the dearest thing in the world. When she had a childish trouble, she carried it, not to her own mother, but to Lee's. For the explanation of this, it must be said that Eleanor Osbourn, out of the strange sufferings and deep joys of her life, had learned to sympathize with people, as only they can, who know human nature, and understand it in a good many different phases. Little children ran to her, and she petted or soothed them, never too busy for their small confidences. Young people brought her their love affairs, and she gave counsel, or helped adjust misapprehension, as if she were as young as the youngest. Old people called her their darling, and brightened if she entered their doors. She had a magnetism that was wonderfully captivating. To her mother, she was more than ever the girl she used to be at home, yet she brooded over her mother as if their relations were reversed.

"The most popular and beloved woman in Islington," said a man one evening, as a little party of friends left the Osbourns' home. Husband and wife had stood together in the drawing-room door, bidding their guests good-night.

"I believe Harry Osbourn's worthy of her, at last," was the thoughtful verdict of the man's companion. "He didn't use to be, but he is now."

"Then love has wrought the miracle, her love."

In the house they had left, Harry was turning down the lights, and bolting the doors for the night. Eleanor, weary, was waiting for him in the library. She sat in an armchair, her black velvet gown falling in rich folds on the carpet, a fluff of white lace covering her throat. Harry came in and stood by the hearth, looking down at her. The lights were out, all except one that burned just over Eleanor's head. There was pride touched with pain in the man's face as he gazed.

"Dearest," he said, "how you carry all before you! How people worship you! I am afraid sometimes, afraid I'll wear out your great patience, that you won't always love me."

"Have I not always loved you?" she answered. "My love is not a thing to ebb and flow. It is yours forever. But don't be worried, dear, I never began to love you when we were mere children in the old war-times, as I love you now."

They sat together, talking till the clock struck, warning them that it was late. As they went upstairs, they stopped at the nursery, to look at their sturdy boy in his healthy sleep, and as they each stooped to kiss his forehead, lightly not to disturb him, they were drawn closer to one another. A child is love's strongest link.

"I'll try, please God, never to give you one moment's pain again," said Harry as they turned away from the little bed.

XXXVII

HARRY'S NEW ROLE

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS is the most hampering condition known to mortal man. He who can cast off its bonds, enters into a realm of enviable freedom. So long as one thinks of the impression he or she is making, so long as one is aware of criticism in some eye, or depreciation in some gesture, or boredom in some attitude, the handicap is fatal to success. One must be free from the dominion of the observer to do one's best work.

An intense self-consciousness had been Harry Osbourn's bane, ever since, leaving Clivedon, he had lived and wrought in Islington. The story of his past, ever present in his memory, was blazed he fancied, in his countenance, and an exaggerated diffidence kept him in the background, whenever there was a call for him outside of business or his home. When he resumed his life, after the interval which grew more and more hazy and dim in his recollection, as hazy as the memory of a dream in the bright waking daylight, he dropped the burden that had weighed him down. Not more entirely did Christian drop his burden at the foot of the cross. For Harry literally, old things had passed away. All things had become new. The change was radical, and he could not explain it, nor could Eleanor, yet both felt it, knew it, and were aware of an extra-

dinary relief from tension, and an immense reaction from care.

Doctor and Mrs. Abbott came from Virginia for a holiday and were guests at the Osbourn home for a fortnight. Dear old Mrs. Abbott was not surprised at the peace she found regnant in her friends and at their renewed youthfulness of feeling.

"I expected this," she said. "I've been praying for it."

"Do you always feel that your prayers are answered, lady?" said Eleanor. "Lady" was a pet name she liked to give the little woman with the silver hair, the woman who was the good angel of many hearts.

"I know they never miss an audience, my dear, and therefore I am sure they are always answered. Not always in the way I hope for, of course, but always as God wills, which is better by far. Still I do believe that when we ask for right things, unselfishly, we may hope to have them granted. God is not less kind than earthly parents and they love to give good gifts to their children."

"I wish every one felt as you do, dear Mrs. Abbott. But you don't know how many good people explain away the whole reality of prayer as an effective power in their lives. They think it wrong to pray for God's help in the daily course. One dear woman said to me yesterday that she would not think of going to God like a beggar with her little cares nor could she expect Him to be bothered with her troubles. Thousands of Christians are very vague in their realization of God as a friend."

"The trouble is, dear, they don't take the plain

Bible and believe every word of it. If God tells me to commit my life into His hands, I commit it, and leave it, and He'll never disappoint my expectation."

Into the blessedness of this conclusion Eleanor had lately entered. A deepening spirituality characterized her as she went on, holding fast to an invisible hand. Far more than had ever been her experience in earlier days, she grew in the knowledge that all life is under God's guiding care, and that even in the little things, one may confidently seek God's daily leading.

"The most unworldly woman I know," remarked one of her friends.

"Say rather the most other-worldly," was the reply of the one addressed.

Mrs. Lee, her eyes now quite sightless, was very dependent upon her daughters for entertainment and attention, but she bore the eclipse with wonderful patience. She was the abler to do this, that she waited for the moment when the little, swift click of the surgeon's knife should remove the cataract, and restore her vision. Meanwhile everybody waited on her, and the children, Lois Waugh and little Lee, were delighted to do her errands. A peculiar serenity ensphered the blind lady, and her friends spoke of it, as remarkable. Yet similar gentle bearing of their affliction is common among the blind, who, though they dwell in darkness so far as the outer world is concerned, would seem to have their own beautiful inner sight of the soul, almost living a dual life.

Donald Waugh made a point of calling on Mrs. Lee, every afternoon on his way from business. The bluff, breezy man, domineering as of old, was a

staunch friend, and there was no arrogance nor self-assertion in his manner when talking with the woman whom he had reverenced from his boyhood. He told her all the news of the day, cheered her by his robust sincerity and did her good, without an effort. Donald did not mind going out of his way to make this daily visit, for he could hardly remember the time when the Lees' house had not been to him as a shrine. His wife said with truth that it was Donald's idea of a sanctuary.

"You know," he said one day, "that I've just found out what a preposterous fellow I've been all my life. Really, Mrs. Lee, it has only dawned on me lately."

Mrs. Lee laughed.

"Preposterous is hardly the word, Donald. But what has aroused this strange conviction?"

"Looking at Harry Osbourn. I thought and dared to say that his usefulness was over, that he would never have influence again, or command respect. I've been kind to him for Eleanor's sake. The fact is, I did not measure the man rightly. He has taken hold of life with splendid heroism at last, and is doing magnificent work, down in the Hollow, among my people, all so quietly and so effectively too. I would not have believed it possible, if I had not seen it. Rachel told me there was stuff in Harry Osbourn, but ——"

"But," repeated Mrs. Lee, "he's been a good while showing it. You and I, Donald, felt exactly alike. There isn't a greater trial for a mother than to see her daughter suffer as Eleanor has suffered, and to be powerless to lift a feather's weight of the load. This

has been my case and I've been dreadfully rebellious. You are making me very happy by speaking as you do. Tell me specifically what has pleased you so much."

"Well, it's not easy to specify. Harry has been standing by his wife in all her plans, as indeed he ought, since he came back to her, and he's been acting in the most brotherly way among the men. He is very sympathetic, and now that he loves and understands them, they listen when he talks, and Rachel says the hall is not big enough to accommodate the men who come to hear him. He is making a good fight against the saloons, not by abuse, or by phillipics, but by offering the men a better ideal of fellowship. He's done already more good in Old Field Hollow than I would have thought possible a year ago, and under his leadership, a band of volunteers, university men, and men from our best families, are organizing for hand to hand work in every ward in the city. Harry Osbourn has arrived at *his* best, and no thanks to me!"

"I am very sure that you did him a good turn in letting him alone. You are a bit overpowering sometimes, and you may have unintentionally robbed him of a certain freedom."

"I think not quite as you do, dear mother," interrupted Kathleen Deland, who had hitherto been a silent listener. "Up to this time Harry was not ready for such work as he is doing now. God has His own ways, don't you think, and He's made him fit, by a discipline that was hard while it lasted."

"A discipline that might have killed my Eleanor," said Mrs. Lee.

"Oh, but it did not. Eleanor was never so fine as she is now. She is as happy as a woman can possibly be."

Donald took his hat.

"Well, I must be going," he said. "The little girl watches from the window, and she runs to meet me. I'd like to be sure that she'll have a smooth time of it all along. To think of Lois' ever having to suffer breaks me up."

"Don't let it," said Mrs. Lee. "Am I to tell you to live by the day? Now that I think of it, I once met an old woman, eighty she was, who boasted that she had never known a sorrow, nor a pain, nor a grief. She looked no younger than her years, and she had missed some of the great joys in missing the sorrows. Donald, we must not wish our loved ones to escape the common lot."

"I suppose it is rather weak," he smiled, as he stood in her door, "but then, I'd like to make an exception of Lois. My comfort is she's got a little iron in her. She'll not be weak."

Kathleen looked after him, laughing as he hurried to catch the car at the corner.

"Is Donald looking well?" asked her mother anxiously.

"Why, yes, dear. I see nothing amiss."

"It's not like Donald to be so lowly in heart."

"Probably it's a passing phase," observed Kathleen. "He's not ready for ascension robes yet, mother. He still refuses to wear any shirts that are not made stitch by stitch, by Mattie's fingers. Is it not absurd?"

"It is indeed, but it's rather characteristic, never-

theless. I don't want to spare Donald. Under the prickles he has a warm heart."

Kathleen paused before she spoke again.

"The one who is really overworking, and who may fly away when we want her most, is Miss Rachel. That Hall of Rest is anything but a resting place for her. She looks pale and tired out, and not a soul takes notice."

Mrs. Lee was all interest. "Then she must be looked after. Kathleen, go down to-morrow morning and bring Miss Rachel to luncheon with me. When the alabaster box is broken to bathe the Master's feet, it's all right, but when it's only spent to save other people work, there's something wrong. Somebody must be found to relieve Rachel Waugh."

"That's precisely what Harry told Eleanor and me yesterday. There's too much confusion in that place, too much that wears on the nerves for a woman approaching seventy to endure safely. Though nobody thinks of Miss Rachel as old! She's so young in heart!"

"You say that Harry has sounded a note of warning?"

"Yes, mother. Harry sees everything in these days. He is not the same man at all. Nobody need patronize him now, and nobody doubts him. It's little short of a miracle."

"One of the Master's miracles," answered the mother reverently, leaning her head upon her hand. "The Christ is blessedly near His own, now as of old. The same dear Saviour, ever strong, ever loving."

She was right.

We often speak as though miracles were wrought only when Jesus walked in Galilee. The truth is our Lord is always working them, but we are dull of heart and eye, and do not see or know. There can never be a miracle greater than the change wrought when a man is truly converted and therefore truly ennobled.

XXXVIII

VISITORS AND PREMONITIONS

ELEANOR'S correct housemaid in her trim print gown, white apron with shoulder straps and big bow, and the dainty little frilled cap on her head, tapped at the door of the morning-room. Lee had gone to the kindergarten which was the delight of his life, Mr. Osbourn was at his office, and Eleanor was busy with her correspondence. It was early for callers, but she heard voices in the hall, as she bade Nancy come in.

"Please, Mrs. Osbourn, here are some people who won't go round to the kitchen door. I told them to."

Great scorn was written on Nancy's face.

"'Cose not. I done seed my Miss Eleanor a settin' by de window, so I'se come straight in. Honey, deah honey, how *is* yo'?"

To Nancy's horror, the stout old black woman who now rushed past her, threw both arms around Mrs. Osbourn, hugging and crying over her, and Eleanor returned the embrace.

"Dear Aunt Polly! where did you drop from?"

"I'se come Norf to work and earn money. I'se brought my Ada; she was the youngest when you lef' Cliveden; a triflin' chile then, but mighty handy now, Miss Eleanor. We've done come straight hyar.

Cliveden's good, but de Norf's better, and we all made up our minds to come Norf. My ole man and de rest of dem 'll come after I'm settled."

Eleanor was rather puzzled what to do with good Aunt Polly. She had been the best of servants in the South, but was not likely to know the regular work demanded in an orderly Northern home. Eleanor could not keep her in her own house. Her staff would leave on the instant if she did. However, Aunt Polly, her plump person filling up one of the rockers and Ada sitting on the floor, their bags and bundles around them, had no fears. The old colored woman had never lost her entire faith in this beloved mistress, and as years and poverty had tried her, she had decided to be her family's pioneer, and precede the rest of them North.

Kathleen settled the problem. She laughed till she cried when she saw Aunt Polly.

"Of course you'll get on here," she said. "You can come straight home with me. We haven't a maid in the house, and Ada can run errands and wait on mother. Aunt Polly, an angel from heaven wouldn't be more welcome to us to-day."

The old Lee homestead was big enough to accommodate all sorts of arrangements, and in the attic, a room was speedily prepared for Aunt Polly and Ada. Mrs. Lee did not object to the soft-voiced, swift-footed little maid, who liked to wait on the helpless lady, and Kathleen was independent on the servant-question for awhile.

Factories were competing with households in Islington, and the young girls who had once been relied on to aid housekeepers were working at the

loom, or in the paper-mill. That the monotonous drudgery of the mill, where a girl must stand for many consecutive hours, doing the same thing over and over and over, in a hot, ill-ventilated room, to the whirring noise of machinery, keeping on hour by hour, should be preferred to the variety offered in the home, is very hard to comprehend. The girl who prizes her independence, however, often votes for the toil of the factory and likes it better than the lighter toil of a domestic's life.

Kathleen had been having trouble in retaining good help, so she welcomed Aunt Polly with joy. Presently she began inviting her friends to luncheons where she regaled them with such fried chicken, hot biscuits and ice cream, as northern cooks cannot evolve from the best materials and the finest receipts. Aunt Polly's pound-cake and her light bread were the admiration of Kathleen's friends. Before long other flustered and discouraged house wives sent South for help, and Aunt Polly had her wish. Her family were about her. She then hired a little house, and instead of living at Mrs. Deland's, went home every night, and felt no pangs of absence drawing her back to Cliveden. In her blue-checked dress, white apron, gay turban, and stout shoes, she was a picturesque figure as she tramped to and fro, in Islington streets, often "toting" Mrs. Deland's marketing safely on her old head, that was set so well on her broad shoulders.

Miss Rachel Waugh took a great fancy to Aunt Polly. It had been easy to persuade this lady to leave the Hall, for she realized that she was no longer fit for it and its incessant motion and drain

on her sympathy. As her own home had a tenant with an unexpired lease, she visited friends for awhile, giving a part of her leisure to Eleanor, another part to Mrs. Lee, and a good share of her time to Donald and Mattie. The latter begged her to make her permanent home with them, but she refused.

"I cannot see my way clearly to such a step," she said. "We Waughs are too pronounced to fit into the homes of our relatives. You wouldn't want me long, Mattie. I'll just stay until I can get into my own house. Meanwhile, what ails Donald?"

"Nothing that I've noticed," said Mattie.

"He's not looking like himself, is he? We have a habit in our family of going to pieces all at once. We keep on working our full time and suddenly we break. If Donald doesn't stop and rest, that is what will happen to him."

Mattie was aghast. She was so accustomed to think of Donald as invincible, that the bare notion of illness or disaster in his case, drove her to panic. What should she do, if anything happened to her husband? What could she do, if there was any danger? Gibraltar was not harder to move than Donald Waugh.

"If you only were not so very well yourself," said Miss Rachel, whimsically, "you might coax him to take you to Europe. But that plan would fall through, wouldn't it?"

"I'll persuade my father," said little Lois firmly, and with the true Waugh decision. "I'll persuade him to-night. Then we'll all go. I want to see Scotland and Switzerland and Italy. I ought to travel for

my education," said the small girl, who was now struggling with her first Latin declensions.

Donald had theories of his own, about the education of Lois, and she heard a good deal said about it when her elders did not notice her presence. Mattie would like to have sent her daughter by graded steps from the kindergarten, straight through to the college for women, then an experiment. Mr. Waugh did not especially care to have her tied down to any school routine. Masters in the house, and a resident governess fitted into his scheme for his idol, and, as usual, he had his way. Lois, once emancipated from her kindergarten, which her father tolerated as a playing at school, was not permitted to enter any other institute. Eleanor Osbourn had been largely educated at home and she warmly championed Donald's ideas. Mattie disapproved, but was content on the whole to let her good man rule in the realm of their daughter's training.

"Be careful, Nellie," advised Kathleen, "how you comment too freely on those queer notions of Donald Waugh's about Lois. Mattie may think you have inspired them."

"I haven't."

"I know you haven't, but Mattie might not unreasonably think you had, and it wouldn't be well to arouse her antagonism."

"Probably with his usual tact Donald holds me up as a shining example. Thanks for the warning. I'll be silent hereafter."

Behold Lois, with a huge atlas in her hand, standing at her father's side, as he sat by the table after dinner, reading his evening paper.

"Is this you, Pussy?" he asked, laying down the finance sheet with its long rows of prices and quotations.

He lifted her to his knee. The big hand stroked her dark red curls.

"Lois, you are too big a girl to sit in your father's lap."

"Tell mother, you wouldn't be too big if you were twenty. Papa's sunbeam!" A world of love lay in the glance he bent on his idol.

"Father," said the child, "please look over the map with me. We all want to go to Europe, and I want you to take us. I want to see the places. I want to go to the place Grandfather Waugh came from, before the Waughs went to Ulster, in Ireland; the Scottish place, father."

"I see that Aunty Rachel has been talking to you, dear. Father'd like to take you across the sea, but he's too busy. Far too busy."

Lois did not speak, but she looked sorry. Her little sensitive face clouded over, and she bit her lips to keep from crying. She traced with her finger the points on the map, points she had been dreaming about all day. Then she turned and gazed at the big man gravely. Tears stood in her eyes.

"Father, it would help my education ever so much," she said.

He gave one of his big hearty laughs. Mattie smiled to hear him. Latterly, he had not laughed much.

"I'll take you, daughter; you and mother and Aunty Rachel."

Turning to his wife he said, "It's odd, Mattie. I

met Dr. Baxter by accident to-day, and he said I must have a vacation. I've been rather tired out lately, and I told him so. This very trip Lois has suggested, is his prescription."

They went away and were gone nearly a year. Lois was glad in the days of her grown-up life that she had coaxed her father to cross the ocean and have that beautiful trip with her and the others. For he came home, better indeed, but not well, and long before Lois had received her school education, it was to her father, a matter of little moment whether she went to college or stayed at home.

But in the years of invalidism that finally were Donald Waugh's portion, he grew wonderfully gentle. One who had known him chiefly in the hard aggressiveness of his earlier days, would not have recognized him as he was gradually mellowed by suffering and softened by enforced retirement from the old activities. Not fretting against necessity as a weaker nature would have done, he accepted what was laid upon him to bear, and looked about for pleasant ways of passing the time. As a Christian, Donald had belonged in the ranks of the militant; he had never been noted for the passive virtues, but as feebler health came upon him he went to school to the Master whose beatitudes are all for the meek and lowly, for the peacemaker and the persecuted and for the pure in heart.

His daughter, like him in many peculiarities of temperament and character, was the gainer by these changed qualities in her father, whose comrade she was. She too, and sooner than he, had many natural features of her disposition modified, and as for Don-

ald, old friends after a time would not have known him for the same man. The arrogance was gone, and with it the note of domination. He grew rather silent than talkative, easily entreated as the Bible puts it, and fond of simple pleasures. Leaving much of the general management of affairs to Mattie, he gave away money freely where she advised it, and for months together was contented to potter about the garden, wear old clothes, and read over for the hundredth time the one or two books he loved, the Bible never tiring him. The visit to Europe was the last stage of Donald Waugh's active life, though he lived to be a very old man. When Lois, taking her education into her own hands, had made herself one of the most thoroughly equipped young women of the day, her mother opposed her going daily to the mills, and entering upon business life, as if she had been a man. It was a new departure then, but it suited Lois Waugh, and she carried on buying and selling, factory work and philanthropy, as energetically as her father had. Often he sat at her side, as she drove about, and whether he was silent or, as sometimes happened, expansive, with flashes of his old oratorical eloquence, Donald Waugh was supremely contented if Lois were his companion.

The loyal little mother who did not fully understand either husband or child, loved and adored both, and she too was content.

So the years drifted on, apparently with few startling events or marked episodes, only the ordinary and commonplace diversifying their course. Lee Osbourn developing studious tastes, went to college and was graduated with honors. His father became

an influential citizen, taking a hand in municipal government, and little by little reaching a position of leadership. To Lee, who had been a very small child in the days when his father had been weak and erratic, Mr. Osbourn represented all that was fine and noble in manhood, and the bond between father and son was one of the most reciprocal confidence. Among the pleasant homes of Islington none was pleasanter than theirs. Musical people brought to it their best, for though Eleanor's own talent was not remarkable, she could appreciate the gifts of others, and she took pains to draw out and cultivate genius in young aspirants wherever she saw an indication of uncommon powers.

Her son was somewhat susceptible, and had his little excursions into the land of dreams and hopes, but though now he admired a girl with a charming face, and again was impressed by another with an exquisite voice, these attractions were soon over, and he remained faithful to one ideal, that was embodied in her who had been his childish playmate and his youthful chum. Lois Waugh was the only true sweetheart Lee Osbourn ever had, and in later days neither could remember when first they recognized their affection as the love that lasts.

XXXIX

FULFILLMENTS

ONWARD swept the ceaseless procession of the years. In their wake inevitably came love's rich fulfillments, and life's harvestings. It is the fashion in books to break off the skein and leave tangled twists and rough ends, as though stories might never finish happily and disappointments were the culmination of every human experience. Yet the romances that blend into realities are seldom wholly sad-colored, and it is true in most human lives, as it is promised in the great Book that it shall be, that at eventime there shall be light.

Late afternoon, golden with sunshine, lay upon an old house wherein was a library filled with the treasured spoils of men who had loved books and bought them, through successive generations. The room was sweet with flower-scents and touched as rooms are with the subtle personality of the gracious people who had lived and worked within its ample space and enclosing walls.

A young girl, on a low stool, leaned her arm across the knees of an older woman, who sat in a high-backed chair. The two were for the moment alone, though voices reached them of children at play, and the monotonous strumming of five-finger exercises on a piano across the hall made a background for their talk. A big yellow cat blinked

sleepily on a cushion in the window-seat. The house always had a yellow cat; the forbears of this one had belonged to it, as did the dim Oriental rugs, and the antique furniture.

The girl was tall and finely formed with outlines that would fill into fuller grace in days to come. She had dark red hair, wavy and abundant, a skin of dazzling fairness, and a hand, not small, but white and capable, from wrist to finger-tips. Her face was vivid and intense, expressive of resolution, but with an undernote of purity and sweetness that gave her an irresistible charm.

Her friend, with soft gray hair piled high above her forehead, and eyes that had not lost their youthful fire, was a woman of the rare type that is lovely to the end, never losing beauty, though never hiding age. She sat up straight in her chair. One saw at once that she was not a woman to loll or lounge. The carriage of her head was queenly. She was a woman accustomed to deference and to granting, not asking, favors.

They had been very quiet for a while, these two, who were close friends, at the moment disagreeing on a subject important to both.

In the hall ticked slowly and solemnly, an old clock that had never fallen into the habit of telling anything but the truth. For two hundred years that clock had done its work, one minute at a time, as steady as time, though hands that had wound it had faltered in their task and laid it down.

"I wish," exclaimed the girl vehemently at last, "that I could be as peaceful as you are, dearest. When I am at home, I domineer over father and

mother, when I go to the mills, I carry all before me there. I know I'm tyrannical, but I can't seem to help it, when I see how they get into fusses over at that absurd Hall of Rest—such a silly name—I just rage and fume at them, but when I sit by you, I'm like a child that has promised to be good."

"And my Lee loves you, Lois," said the older woman dreamily. "Are you going to be good to him? Because, I'm afraid, darling, you'll be very unhappy unless you can learn more self-control than either of you has shown yet. If you were not both only children! I'm afraid you've been spoiled, and spoiling in childhood isn't a good preparation for the hardships of life. This is why I'm so willing to have you separated while Lee goes over to Berlin to study, and you stay here, and carry on all the work you manage so well."

"Two years is an eternity!"

"And you are not to be engaged during them, dear child. You are to be free. Lee is to be free. It is not as if you had not grown up together. I'm afraid, sometimes, that your love is only propinquity; only being used to each other."

"Well," the girl drew a long breath, "I used to think you understood me, but you don't, not a bit. I'll run away, lest I say something I'll regret. Oh, here is dear Mrs. Lee. She'll understand."

Lois felt not unreasonably vexed. Propinquity indeed! Odious word! Why surely Mrs. Osbourn must know how much it was misapplied.

"Are you quarrelling?" asked Mrs. Lee, surveying them keenly. The cataract had been removed, and her sight restored some time before this.

"Not quarrelling, mother, but I've been talking to Lois, as I have to my husband. I don't think the children should be engaged until Lee gets through his work at Berlin, and his heart is set on taking that post-graduate course, you know. There is no occasion for haste. Why should Lois decide till she has seen more of the world? Besides Lois will be very rich, and Lee should not be supposed to want her fortune."

"That speech," said Lois decidedly, "is unworthy of you, Mrs. Osbourn. Say what you mean, that she is too conceited, too self-willed, too anything that you don't approve. Why not," she went on stormily, rising and standing by the table, "say right out that you wish in your heart that Lee had not fallen in love with her or any one else? But now it's done, it can't be helped. And you are annoyed because I am older than Lee. Almost two years older! I do wish I were not, but I can't help myself. Don't for pity's sake, think I'm pleading for either of us; I wouldn't condescend to, but I think you are awfully cruel, and you forget that you were once a girl. If my father were not an invalid, he would speak for us, I know he would."

A boyish footstep came ringing across the path, and in walked a tall young fellow, with eyes like his mother, and a look of the sun in the morning.

"Hello!" he cried, "what luck! Here you are, Lois, just when I wanted you, and where I wanted you. Now, mother, I've had the thing out with my father, and he has given his full consent. Lois, my darling, why can't we be married before I go to Europe?"

"Your mother doesn't want us so much as engaged, Lee!"

"Well, mother has sense. I don't want to be engaged. I want to be married, and to take my bride over with me. I see no manner of reason for any delay."

The years seemed to roll away before Eleanor's eyes. She heard, in her boy's tones, the vehement tones of her lover of the long ago; she heard again the same passionate pleading.

Her old mother looked up and smiled.

"Why this hurry, you foolish children?"

"We are growing older every day, and something may happen. I want to take my wife with me when I go over there to study." Lee looked determined. The want was imperious.

Harry Osbourn, gray, portly, of commanding presence, had followed his son home. He came in and launched at once into the midst of the discussion. As he crossed the room to stand beside his wife, he gave Lois a friendly glance and pressed her hand.

"They are right, wife," he declared. "There would be no reason whatever in putting off their wedding. I'd rather not have my boy go alone when Lois is not averse to going too."

Eleanor looked doubtful. "I have never grown used to thinking these children of age," she said. "Yet Lee is twenty-one, and Lois——"

"Twenty-three," responded Lois promptly. "Venerable!"

"Hush, Lois!" Lee would never hear a word about those two years of advantage on her part.

"I look older than you do," he whispered, consolingly.

"I have had a very plain talk with your father, Lois," said Mr. Osbourn, "and he is on your side and Lee's. Mr. Waugh is good enough to say that he prefers no postponement, and that no choice his daughter could make would be more pleasing to him."

"Yes, the dear father would never stand in the way of my happiness," said Lois, "nor would mother. I couldn't very well stay two years away from them, though. Father would miss me."

"You should come home whenever you wished, if they could not come to us," Lee declared.

"It was our engagement, not our wedding, I wanted sanctioned," said Lois.

"You see, love, I am the wiser," insisted Lee. "Come, mother mine, give us your blessing."

There was a little more conversation, and then Eleanor hauled down her flag. She took Lois in her arms and kissed her.

"I could not wish for a dearer daughter," she said. "Pardon me if I have been cold. I love you, my child, and you shall share the love I give my boy. May he never cause you a single heartache!"

"Ah, now mother," cried Lee, "and what makes you drop into that plaintive note? If heartaches are around, I'll be the one to bear them, not she."

Kathleen's bevy of young people and children came trooping in. The old house was gay with the large family of Kathleen and Dick, and the grandmother thought they kept her young.

Lois and Lee took leave and strolled off together, a pair whom nature had designed each to complement

the other. Eleanor lingered, looking at the home where she had been a girl, the house so little changed. She felt herself older, yet the heart of youth throbbed in her again as she and her husband walked home under the maple trees.

"Are you sure, Harry, that you are right in encouraging his scheme?" she asked. "I cannot feel that we are wise in saying yes. I don't want it to look to the world, as if Lee is trying to marry the Waugh fortune."

"You almost make me angry, Nellie, or you would, if I could be angry with *you*. As if Lee Osbourn were a pauper, or an idiot, and not a pretty well-to-do young man, clean, handsome, wholesome, with a bright future before him, if God spares his life, and as if Lois Waugh were not a most charming girl, of a personality like flame, and a parentage that of itself is a certificate of character. I am thankful to see them mated. Nothing could be better. Waugh thinks as I do."

"There's a good deal of Donald Waugh in Lois," said Eleanor reflectively. "Life with her won't be a gracious and amiable affair. There'll be ups and downs."

"There's a good deal of his dear mother in Lee," answered Harry. "I'll back him for winnings in any race, God bless him!"

"I suppose it was to be," acquiesced Eleanor, as they reached their door.

A little lady was there before them. It was Mattie, stouter, compacter than ever, but smiling and gracious. She came forward with extended hands.

"Lois could have chosen nobody who would have

pleased me, and her father, as Lee Osbourn does," she said. "We'll give them a beautiful wedding, and once they are married, I hope Lee will put his foot down, and keep my daughter away from counting-rooms and factories forever more."

A few weeks later bride and groom sailed away. As the parents of both went home to houses that for awhile would be a little lonelier, they were silent.

Donald Waugh slipped Mattie's hand into his, and with more animation than he had recently shown, said,

"I have you still, dear. We'll go over by and by and bring them back."

Eleanor, with an ache at the back of her eyes, that felt like tears, sat up very straight, and when her husband's arm went round her, smiled. It was a brave smile, as brave as her life, for she had not wished her only son to marry at twenty-one. But this was a selfish feeling and she knew it and put it down. After an hour alone in her chamber, she joined Harry, and her face was serene as a summer morning.

"We are not going to be morbid, are we?" he said caressingly.

She lifted eyes that were shining through tears.

"Harry, what is before those two, only God knows."

"Let us hope that God knowing, will guide them aright," he said.

"Lois is too masterful in her nature, she has yielded too little, to be at once a happy wife."

"Lee is very considerate, and both are wholly in love, dear. Is not that fact a pledge that all will be

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well with them? Come, Eleanor, be just. We cannot keep our children little forever, and in their blithe day of youth, why should we begrudge them their right to their own lives? Be just, my darling. We too have been young."

"You will be young when you are threescore and ten, Harry Osbourn."

"And you can never be old," he answered gallantly. "Come, dear, we're not going to be morbid, are we?"

"No. We are going to be thankful. We are going to remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

"Dear," said the husband, "God has been good to us, unspeakably good. Has He not? Shall we not trust Him still?"

"Yes," said the wife, "I have nothing in my heart but praise."

THE END

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